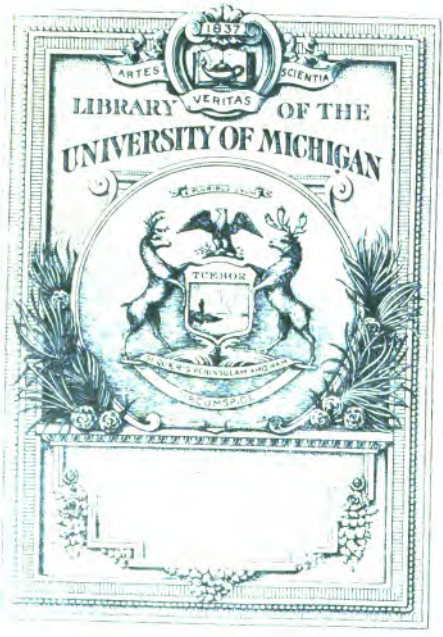
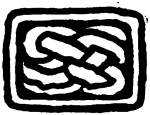


The Players Ibsen



The Players' Ibsen

Little Eyolf

Newly translated from the definitive Dano-Norwegian text

Edited,
with introduction and notes, by
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INTRODUCTION

"Little Eyolf" (*"Lille Eyolf"*) was written by Ibsen in Christiania during the spring and summer of 1894, when the author was 66 years old. Three years before this he had come back to Norway, after his voluntary exile of 27 years. It was his plan then to make but a brief stay; for, with the passing of the years, he had become a thoroughgoing German, outwardly as well as inwardly, and Munich seemed like home to him; but the welcome that he received from his long-forsaken compatriots was so enthusiastic and so apparently genuine that he succumbed to it. For a while, it is true, he still talked of Germany, but that was but for a while. Soon he sent for his furniture and established himself on the Viktoria Terrasse, in Christiania. A bit later he acquired a house on the Drammensvej, opposite the Royal Gardens — a splendid, uncomfortable house filled with bad paintings — and there he wrote "Little Eyolf." There, too, he passed into the shadow of his mental breakdown, and there, on May 23, 1906, he died.

"Little Eyolf" followed "The Master-Builder" after an interval of two years, and was

destined to be followed, in turn, by "John Gabriel Borkman" and "When We Dead Awaken." All four belong to what may be called the fourth, and last phase of Ibsen's creative activity. To his first phase, as we all know, belong the imitative poems and dramas of his youth, and to his second period the splendid epic plays which won him his first reputation — "Brand," "Peer Gynt" and "Emperor and Galilean." His third phase began with "A Doll's House" in 1879 and ended with "Hedda Gabler" in 1890. It is upon this penultimate group that the playwright's present fame is based, and out of the dramas composing it has grown that structure of discipleship and imitation which stands as the visible symbol of the Ibsen influence to-day. Whether or not the four plays of his last period, in the days to come, will make a like mark upon the dramaturgy of the world is a problem beyond solution. It is enough to say of them that the first two, in more than one way, represent a step forward; that, in the true sense, both belong to the drama of the future. The last two are more elusive, and, judged by present standards, less important.

Of the natural history of "Little Eyolf" we know next to nothing. Edmund Gosse, in his biography of Ibsen, suggests that the dramatist got his idea for the play from Leo Tolstoy's "The Kreut-

zer Sonata," which appeared in 1889. "When I ventured to ask Ibsen whether there was anything in this," says Gosse, "he was displeased and stoutly denied it." The biographer makes the sage observation that "what an author denies is not always evidence," but in this case we can afford to take Ibsen's word, for the resemblance between the drama and the novel is far from close. Indeed, as Count Prozor somewhere remarks, the last act of "Little Eyolf," with its picture of love purified and transfigured, is an effective answer to Tolstoy's extravagant criticism of the marital bond.

Another critic, this time a Dane,[1] suggests that Ibsen borrowed from a play called "The Balcony," by Gunnar Heiberg,[2] one of his disciples; but here again it is best to believe slowly. "The Balcony" was published in 1894, probably after the actual writing of "Little Eyolf" was far advanced, and certainly long after the plan of the play had taken form in Ibsen's mind, for he was not a facile worker and his ideas were ever tardy in crystallizing. In "The Balcony" there was a heroine jealous of her husband's life-work and loud in her demands that his wooing be without ceasing, and in "Little Eyolf" there was the same insatiable woman. Both plays, again, gave glimpses of the grosser side of love, and so an uproar from the idealists followed the appearance of each, but fur-

ther than this the coincidence fails to do service. One is reminded here of the efforts of many a laboring critic to prove Shakespeare's debt to this and that forgotten one.[8]

In "Little Eyolf," as in "A Doll's House," "Ghosts," "Hedda Gabler" and other plays before it, marriage is Ibsen's theme — marriage, that is, as civilization has burdened it and complicated it. In the days of Tubal Cain a man bought a wife, and that was the end of it. No clashes of discordant personalities came afterward, to cause disquiet. The man got food for the household and the woman cooked it and bore children. Neither was troubled by a variance between the yearnings of temperament and the demands of duty. Much the same simplicity is to be found in the more elemental sort of fiction to-day; and also, perhaps, among the more elemental classes of human beings, even in civilized societies. The hero meets the heroine, acquires an ambition to make her his wife, and at some cost of blood, sleep, money and skill at fence, accomplishes his aim. Their relations after that give the chronicler no concern. Once married, they are happy, *ipso facto,* forevermore.

Ibsen took a far less naïve view of the matrimonial contract. Without engaging in the vain debate as to its essential reasonableness and necessity, he set himself to study its influence upon human

character and human happiness. The things which differentiate marriage from all other forms of contract, he saw clearly enough, are its unconditionality and its unlimited duration — its assumption that what a man promises to do to-day he will be able to do, in the same manner and with the same willingness, all the rest of his life. Take away from marriage this element of perpetuity and it ceases to be marriage, as we peoples of the West understand the word.

But does a man ever attain such complete mastery of himself as this unconditioned promise implies? Is it possible for him to resist the effects of time, age and mutable environment? Is he really superior, after all, to the forces which make for evolution — the forces from which Allmers deduces his "law of change"? "Little Eyolf" asks these questions, and in Ibsen's manner of presenting them and dealing with them there is an unmistakable echo of Nietzsche. The ideal qualities seen in the beloved, through the rosy glasses of love, will disappear with the mood which has called them into being, and if a catastrophe is to be avoided there must be some effort to find contentment in the real qualities which appear beneath them. In other words, each party to the contract must agree to a constant change in its terms, for without such adaptability it cannot long endure.[4] This is the thesis

of "Little Eyolf," if any play of Ibsen's may be said to have a thesis at all.

Alfred and Rita Allmers have made what most worldly persons would regard as a very satisfactory marriage. Alfred is a dreamer whose poverty has kept him from executing the great work which fills his thoughts; Rita is a dreamer, too, and her dream is of a love changeless and illimitable. To Alfred, Rita will bring devotion and, what is more important, money, for she is rich; to Rita, Alfred will bring constancy, for he is not of the sort that roam. There will be long days of loving and dreaming; day after day, time without end: he at work in his study, wooing fame; she hovering about him. And so, when they wed, the auguries are auspicious.

But most of the love, it is plain, is on Rita's side, and after awhile this becomes apparent to both. Alfred is immersed in his work — his great tome upon "Human Responsibility" — and her kisses begin to pall. When a child is born he looks for a change in her: he fancies that the hot passion of the wife will be cooled by the gentler concerns of the mother. But he is disappointed, for maternity, to Rita, is but an incident. She is jealous of her husband's work, of his devoted half-sister, and of her own child. She will not be denied her feast of kisses.

In Alfred, with his pedant's cold blood — how

well Ibsen knew that blind, emotionless, Tesman-Allmers type! — all of this engenders a rising disquiet. No longer a willing partner in love, he has become its mere instrument. And when, as the consequence of a wild orgy of dalliance, planned and enkindled by Rita, Little Eyolf, his first-born, is maimed for life, revulsion and disgust sicken him. He yearns for freedom, for forgetfulness, for a breath of clean air. His rôle of houri in what Mr. Shaw has called "a monogamic harem" has become impossible.

Thus Allmers is led to sling his pilgrim's knapsack upon his shoulder and seek the vast, open spaces — to wander aimlessly, brooding and melancholy, upon the mountain tops — to search the infinite for release from his earthly sorrows. But that sort of escape is but temporary and tantalizing, for soon or late, he knows, he must come back and face the facts of life anew. When he returns, it is plain that the bludgeoning he has received has wrecked his feeble ambition; he is no longer fit to struggle with his gigantic life-work — meet task, as it is, for a man sound in mind and body and supremely sure of himself. So he resolves to devote his days to his poor little son, to the child whose whole existence must be burdened by the consequences of his weakness and folly. The heights that he himself can never hope to reach, Little Eyolf will scale. In

the boy he will realize his own ambition. Henceforth he will be, not a mate, but a father. The thought gives Allmers a renewed grip upon things and lifts him, for the moment, out of his slough of despond.

But in all this he reckons without Rita. When he tries to make her understand his vast, nebulous resolves she sweeps them aside with impatience. What of loving? Is there to be an end of that?

Alfred begs the question and rambles on with his plans and hopes for Little Eyolf. The boy shall prove the blood of his race; he shall achieve where his father has but dreamed; he shall triumph where his father has but groped and hoped. But then Eyolf — bruised plaything of fate! — follows the lure of the Rat-Wife and once more Allmers' whole fabric of yearnings and ambitions comes tumbling about his ears.

In the death of the child — for the moment, at least — Rita sees her own salvation. No longer a father, Allmers may become once more a lover. But the hope is not long-lived, for it is soon apparent that the situation is not better, but worse. Upon Allmers' weak, unordered, irresolute mind the death of the child comes as a staggering blow. Utterly distracted, he is full of self-accusing, and turning upon Rita, with denunciation and loathing, he infects her with his own fear of mysterious portents

and punishments. To him the thought of living with her becomes unbearable, and he resolves to fly. But before long the very violence of his mental turmoil brings him peace. The situation is too vast for him; his puny wits are scattered. At last, perforce, he abandons his vain attempt to find a cause for every effect; he is no longer concerned with the weighing of responsibilities; he sees, as a ray of calm sunlight at the end of his storm, the utter meaninglessness of things. And so he arrives at resignation — a goal that a man of stronger fibre would have reached at the start, and without all his wandering and suffering.

As for Rita, she attains peace by a less circuitous and painful route, for the object of her heart's desire, though equally inaccessible, is more simple, and in consequence, less maddening. She wants only her lover and she struggles to get him back. When in the end it becomes plain that he is lost forever, she abandons her effort with scarcely a cry. When Allmers asks her if she would follow him in death, she answers "No," and her "no," as a Danish critic has pointed out, takes away from her love all its confidence. She has come face to face with the impossible, the unattainable. Here, at last, too late to give her true happiness, but not too late to fill her life, she emerges from the mate into the mother. She, too, must submit to the law of

change. Her own child is gone, but there are other children who need her, perhaps even more than he did. And thus Allmers and Rita, arriving at peace by different paths, face the facts of existence with fresh courage, and hand in hand.

The part that Asta plays in the drama is that of a mere instrument of fate. Like the Rat-Wife, she is a god from the machine, and nothing more. In particular, she is Allmers' angel of final disillusion. First of all, he is made to see the falsity of marriage, then he sees the falsity of his life work, and in the end Asta shows him the falsity of his ideal of love without passion. He has been living in a world of fantasies and impossibilities and he must be brought down to the muck and mire of reality. It is Asta, his best-beloved, who must pronounce his final doom. In the situation there is a note of grim, terrible humor almost Greek — a suggestion of Ion menaced by the frenzied Creusa — and some hint, too, of Lear. From no other lips could Allmers' doom come more poignantly.

Rita is one of Ibsen's most natural and effective women, if only because of her insistence throughout upon the imminent object. In her sight Allmers' inarticulate maunderings seem obviously insane: she can see no excuse for vast, indefinite plannings when there is champagne on the table. Her philosophy, like that of Gina Ekdal before her, is one of

utilitarian opportunism — the inevitable philosophy of the eternal feminine. She is neither introspective nor far-seeing. Her imagination makes no bold and soaring flights. It is sufficient for her that a day of happiness is within reach and that to-morrow is blessedly beyond her range of vision. And neither is she concerned with the inwardness of the things of yesterday. It is enough for her that they are past and that the edge of their torment is dulled. But the reader who sees in Rita's thirst for love only a low form of brute sensuality is very greatly in error. She is a healthy animal, and at times she seems to be nothing more, but at other times her yearning is for the poetry of love rather than for its hot kisses. She wants to be wooed perpetually; to enjoy forever the thrill of yielding; to give herself, over and over, in intoxicating surrender. Hers is the primitive dramatic instinct of the child and the woman — that elementary artistic impulse which desires the mimic representation, again and again, of something once enjoyed. At times, true enough, she employs the frank lures of the drab, without effort at idealization, but that is only because all gentler arts have failed her. Her sensuality is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

Allmers belongs to a type Ibsen loved to draw — a type common enough in the Norway that the

dramatist knew, it would appear, but rare among the peoples of English tongue. He is a combination of infinite ambition and infinite inefficiency — a half-blind man searching for worlds beyond Orion. His thoughts are formless and chaotic; he plans an encyclopedia of human wisdom and finds it impossible to execute the first article. Ibsen was not without some taint of this splendid *folie* himself: he dreamed a bit too much and worked a bit too little. It is this that makes him seem wild and incomprehensible, at times, to readers of the west; that makes him cabalistic and fabulous, like his own Peer Gynt. Perhaps in Allmers' doubt of himself and in his resolution to seek for the satisfaction of his ambition in his son, we may even glimpse some trace of the Ibsen of the blank years preceding 1876 — of the Ibsen who passed through what Mr. Gosse calls an "unprecedented period of inanition," suffering the pangs of irresolution and self-doubt and turning for consolation to great plans for his son's future eminence in statecraft.

Allmers, to resume, is a dreamer mauled by pitiless realities. The world is too much for him and he flees from it. But one cannot remain on the mountain peaks forever, and so he comes back once more to brave out the slings of fate. When catastrophe after catastrophe overtakes him he thinks, like all such weaklings, of suicide, but even here he can sum-

mon up no resolution. In the end, he finds peace in what is not far from religion — the one refuge for all upon whom the world bears too terribly. In the long dialogue between Allmers and Rita in act three, Ibsen lays bare the emotional struggle which, soon or late, gives most men a belief in immortality. The workings of fate are incomprehensible; therefore, they are not realities at all, but mere appearances. Little Eyolf is not really dead. His body is at the bottom of the fjord, but his soul lives on, for it is inconceivable that all this suffering should be for naught. It may not be scientific, this parody of logic, but for all that it is supremely human.

Few things happen in "Little Eyolf." The play deals, not with events, but with states of mind. In the present condition of the drama, it seems to belong to the psychological laboratory rather than to the theatre, but this seeming may be only seeming, for the tide, it is plain, is setting away from mere events, and in the direction of states of mind. In the novel we may sense the evolution by comparing, say, "Tom Jones" with any of the major stories of Joseph Conrad. And in the great plays of all ages there have been indications of this tendency. It seemed almost victorious, for a while, among the Greeks, and it appeared again in Hamlet's soliloquy. In "Little Eyolf" Ibsen has taken such a bold step forward that the world, perhaps, is not

ready to follow him. To the casual theatre-goer his scenes seem to be made up of tiresome and pointless talk, but to the more attentive student they are infinitely interesting and suggestive. With what comprehension and art is Allmers drawn! We see into the very soul of the man and witness his struggle with fate as clearly as, in more elemental dramas, we see the hero fight his foes. And Rita — what a veritable woman she is! Her woman's inability to comprehend the vast problems which engage Allmers, her quick seizure of small advantages, her little weaknesses and chicaneries, her manœuvring of Asta and Borgheim, her petty play-acting — all these things give her vitality and reality.

With the minor characters Ibsen took less pains. The business of the play, after all, is with Allmers and Rita, and the others merely serve the purpose of pawns. Borgheim, the man of action, whose joy is in doing rather than in dreaming, is sketched in broadly and for the purpose of theatrical contrast only. Against his hearty good humor — the eternal optimism of efficiency — Allmers' brooding and complaining appear with deepened shadows. Asta, it is plain, is little more than a lay figure. She has reality, for Ibsen's pen-stroke was sure, even in its barest outlines of women, but she has no great importance. There is, indeed, no little art in the

manner of her subordination. Eyolf, like Asta, is a mere instrument of fate. In his death we see, not his own poor tragedy, but an incident in the lives of Allmers and Rita.

The symbolists have read many readings into the Rat-Wife, but it is not well to take that sort of speculation too seriously. Ibsen himself spent a good part of his life combating the efforts of all such imaginative interpreters. It was his endeavor, he more than once protested, to write plays, and not to set cryptograms, and if, at times, he dealt in the fantastic, he did so with the definite object of heightening and coloring his atmosphere, after the fashion of Shakespeare in many a play, and not in order to propound maddening riddles for readers and playgoers.

Ibsen got the notion of the Rat-Wife, no doubt, from the Pied Piper of Hamelin, though the old story may have come to him in Norwegian garb. The Rat-Wife is a poor, half-witted wanderer who believes in her own magic and induces Rita (and even Allmers, in his more transcendental moments) to believe in it, too. Little Eyolf, in whom the weakness of Allmers appears grotesquely exaggerated, is fascinated, as any such neurotic boy might be, by the very horror the Rat-Wife inspires, and so follows her down to the fjord. There, watching her row out over the water, he goes too near the

edge of the pier and falls overboard. The Rat-Wife has boasted of her prowess in luring all gnawing things, and Eyolf's presence, by some effort of the imagination, may be regarded as a gnawing thing in the Allmers household. In this fact lies the excuse for all the fabric of symbolism and *double entente* erected about the play. But it is apparent that one may read it, discuss it and admire its surpassing art without seeing in all this more than a charming touch of poetry.[5]

Despite Mr. Archer's belief that the last act of "Little Eyolf" gives evidence that "the poet's technical staying-power is beginning to fail him," the hand of the master-craftsman is more than once visible in the drama. Mr. Shaw calls it "an extraordinarily powerful play;" Mr. Macfall sees in it "a triumph of art," and Mr. Gosse, though grudgingly, admits that "it may be fairly considered in the light of a *tour de force.*" The action throughout is markedly natural and in those little things which help to determine and interpret character the dramatist's hand is sure. A Danish critic complains that the dialogue, in places, is disjointed, and that Ibsen puts too much into his stage directions, but a bit of reflection will show that this characteristic, in itself, is not a defect. Ibsen, in fact, made a merit of it, and many other playwrights have followed him, notably Jones, Pinero and

Hauptmann. To the professional critic, who spends night after night hearing immaculate leading men speak the immaculate tongue of the stage aristocracy, with every "can't" changed religiously to "cannot," the muttered, broken sentences of Allmers may seem absurd, but it must be remembered that Ibsen sought to depict, not a leading man, but a human being, and that human beings have a habit of speaking so.[6]

Despite its important theme, its incisive characterization, its sound philosophy and its touches of genius, "Little Eyolf" is scarcely a play for the stage of to-day. We are still determined to keep psychology, save in its most elemental form, for the study. In the theatre we are in the habit of fixing our attention, not upon what a play personage thinks about a given circumstance, but upon what he does about it. We yearn for movement, for physical action: we want to see the hero walk, fight, gesticulate, eat, slap his friend's back. Wherefore, the long dialogues between Allmers and Rita seem unnatural, and until their puzzling novelty wears off, tiresome. But, from the printed page and with the glare of the theatre lacking, some measure of their art and of their portent reaches us. And so we may enjoy them in the study until such time as the wheel of change, in its endless revolution, brings them to the stage.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This translation of "Little Eyolf" has been made from the text of the final Danish edition. It has been diligently compared to the English version of William Archer and the admirable German version of Julius Elias and Paul Schlenther, both of which follow the original closely, and to the free French translation of Count Prozor.

Like "John Gabriel Borkman" and "When We Dead Awaken," "Little Eyolf" presents very serious difficulties to the translator. The long dialogues between Allmers and Rita, in the second and third acts, are marked by minute shades of meaning and half-uttered thoughts. All of these are understandable enough in the original, but understanding them in one language differs vastly from putting them, with equal clarity, into another language, whose structure presents difficulties of its own. It would be useless to cite examples to readers unfamiliar with Dano-Norwegian. Suffice it to say that the translator has been at great pains to follow the text exactly; that he has sought to retain some flavor of the Norwegian idioms, and that he has borne in

mind those slight differences in phraseology and usage which Ibsen often employs to differentiate characters. The habit of turning colloquial Norwegian into bookish English, which marks so many of the Ibsen translations, has been very carefully avoided.

The editor is indebted to Miss Mary Shaw, Miss Sarah McVicker, Miss Gretchen Hartman and Mme. Alla Nazimova for generous assistance.

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

ALFRED ALLMERS, a landed proprietor and man of letters, formerly a tutor.
MRS. RITA ALLMERS, his wife.
EYOLF, their child, nine years old.
MISS ASTA ALLMERS, Alfred's younger half-sister.
ENGINEER BORGHEIM.[T]
THE RAT-WIFE.

The action takes place on Allmers' estate, on the fjord, a couple of miles from town (Christiania.)

LITTLE EYOLF

First Act

A pretty and richly furnished garden room; much furniture, flowers and plants. In the background, open glass doors, leading to a veranda. A wide view over the fjord. Wooded ridges in the distance. A door in each of the side walls; the one on the right, a double door, is further back than the other. In front, to the right, a sofa, with cushions and rugs. Chairs and a small table beside the sofa. In front, to the left, a larger table, with easy chairs about it. On the table stands an open hand-bag. It is an early summer morning; warm, sunshiny weather.

Mrs. Rita Allmers stands by the table, with her back toward the right, unpacking the hand-bag. She is a handsome, rather tall, well-developed blonde, about thirty years old, dressed in a light-colored morning gown.

Shortly after, Miss Asta Allmers comes in through the door to the right, wearing a light-brown summer dress, with hat, jacket and parasol. Under her arm she carries a rather large locked portfolio. She is slender, of medium height, with dark hair, and deep, serious eyes. Twenty-five years old.

ASTA. [Inside the door.] Good morning, my dear Rita.

RITA. [Turns her head and nods to her.] Hello! Is that you, Asta? Come out from town so early? All the way out here to us?

ASTA. [Lays her things on a chair by the door.] Yes, I had no rest nor peace. I felt I *must* come out to-day and see how little Eyolf was getting on — and you, too. [Lays the portfolio on the table beside the sofa.] And so I came by the steamer.

RITA. [Smiles to her.] And on board, perhaps, you met some good friend? Quite by chance, I mean.

ASTA. [Quietly.] No, I met no one that I knew. [Sees the hand-bag.] Why, Rita, what have you got there?

RITA. [Continues to unpack.] Alfred's travelling-bag. Don't you recognize it?

ASTA. [Joyfully, approaching her.] What! Has Alfred come home?

RITA. Yes, just think of it! — he came quite unexpectedly by the night train.

ASTA. Oh, so *that* was what my feeling meant! It was *that* that drew me out here! — And he hadn't written a line beforehand? Not even a post-card?

RITA. Not a single word.

ASTA. Nor even telegraphed?

RITA. Yes, an hour before he arrived — quite curtly and coldly. [Laughs.] Don't you think that was like him, Asta?

ASTA. Yes, indeed; he is so quiet about everything.

RITA. But that made it all the more delightful to have him again.

ASTA. Yes, I can understand that.

RITA. All of fourteen days before I expected him!

ASTA. And he is quite well? Not in low spirits?

RITA. [Closes the bag with a snap and smiles at her.] He looked quite transfigured as he came through the door.

ASTA. And not a bit tired, either?

RITA. Yes; I really believe he *was* tired — very tired, in fact. But, poor fellow, he had come on foot most of the way.

ASTA. And then, perhaps, the mountain air was rather too keen for him.

RITA. No; I don't think so at all. I haven't heard him cough once.

ASTA. Ah, there you see now! It was a good thing, after all, that the doctor persuaded him to take this trip.

RITA. Yes, now that it's over at last. — But I can tell you it has been a terrible time for me, Asta. I have never cared to talk about it, and you came out to see me so seldom —

ASTA. Yes, I suppose that wasn't very nice of me. But —

RITA. Oh, well — you had your school in town. [Smiles.] And then our road-maker — he was away, too.

ASTA. Oh, stop that, Rita.

RITA. Very well, then; let the road-maker go. — But how I have been longing for Alfred! Such emptiness! Such desolation! Ugh, it was as if there had been a funeral in the house!

ASTA. Why, dear me, only six or seven weeks —

RITA. Yes; but you must remember that Alfred had never been away from me before — never as much as twenty-four hours. Never in all the ten years —

ASTA. No; but that is why I really think it was high time for him to go away awhile this year. He ought to have gone on a mountain tramp every summer — that's what he ought to have done.

RITA. [Half smiling.] Oh, yes; it's all very well for you to talk. If I were as — as reasonable as you, I suppose I should have let him go before — perhaps. But I really couldn't do it, Asta. It seemed to me I should never get him back again. Surely you can understand *that?*

ASTA. No. But I daresay that is because I have no one to lose.

RITA. [With a teasing smile.] Have you really nobody — ?

ASTA. Not that *I* know of. [Changing the subject.] But tell me, Rita, where is Alfred? Is he asleep?

RITA. No; far from it. He got up to-day as early as ever.

ASTA. Well, then, he can't have been so tired, after all.

RITA. Yes; last night — when he arrived.

But now he has had Eyolf in his room with him a whole hour and more.

ASTA. Poor little pale boy! And now is he to begin studying and studying again?

RITA. [With a shrug of her shoulders.] Alfred will have it so, you know.

ASTA. Yes; but it seems to me that you ought to oppose it, Rita.

RITA. [Somewhat impatiently.] No — really — I can't meddle with that. Alfred must understand those things better than I. — And what would you have Eyolf do? You know he can't run around and play — like other children.

ASTA. [With decision.] I am going to talk to Alfred about it.

RITA. Yes, dear; I wish you would — Ah, look here!

[Alfred Allmers, in summer dress, leading Eyolf by the hand, comes in through the door to the left. He is a slender, lightly-built man of about thirty-six or thirty-seven years, with mild eyes, thin brown hair and beard. On his face is a serious and thoughtful expression. Eyolf wears a suit cut like a uniform, with gold braid and military buttons.[8] He is lame and walks with a crutch under his left arm.

His leg is crippled. He is undersized and looks sickly, but has beautiful, intelligent eyes.]

ALLMERS. [Drops Eyolf's hand, goes up to Asta with evident pleasure, and holds out both his hands to her.] Asta! Dearest Asta! And you are out here! To think that I should see you so soon!

ASTA. I felt I must — Welcome home again!

ALLMERS. [Shaking her hands.] Thank you for that!

RITA. Doesn't he look splendid!

ASTA. [Gazes at him fixedly.] Marvellous! Quite marvellous! His eyes are so much brighter! And I suppose you have done a great deal of writing on your trip? [With a joyful exclamation.] Perhaps the whole book is finished, Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Shrugging his shoulders.] The book — ? Oh, *that* —

ASTA. Yes; I was sure it would go easily if you could only get away.

ALLMERS. I thought so, too. But, then — it was quite otherwise. I really haven't written one line of the book.

ASTA. You have not written — ?

RITA. Oho! I wondered why all the paper in your bag was untouched!

ASTA. But, my dear Alfred, what have you been doing all this time?

ALLMERS. [Smiles.] Just gone on thinking and thinking and thinking.

RITA. [Putting her arm round his neck.] And thinking a little, too, of those who remained at home?

ALLMERS. Yes, you may be sure of that. Much, indeed. Every single day.

RITA. [Lets go of him.] Well, then everything is all right.

ASTA. But you haven't written any part of the book at all? And yet you can look so happy and contented? That is not what you generally do — I mean when your work is going badly.

ALLMERS. You are right there. I have been foolish in the past. All the best that is in you goes into thinking. What you put on paper doesn't amount to much.

ASTA. [With an exclamation.] Doesn't amount to much?

RITA. [Laughs.] Have you gone crazy, Alfred?

EYOLF. [Looks up at him confidingly.] Oh, yes, papa — that which *you* write amounts to something.

ALLMERS. [Smiles and strokes his hair.] Well, well, since *you* say so — But you may be sure — some one will come afterward who will do it better.

EYOLF. What sort of a somebody will that be? Oh, tell me!

ALLMERS. Just wait! He will be sure to come and announce himself.

EYOLF. And what will you do then?

ALLMERS. [Seriously.] Then I will go up into the mountains again —

RITA. Fie, Alfred! Shame on you!

ALLMERS. — up to the peaks and the great open spaces.

EYOLF. Papa, don't you think I'll soon be well enough for you to take me with you?

ALLMERS. [Painfully moved.] Oh, yes; perhaps so, my little boy.

EYOLF. It seems to me that it would be so fine if I could climb the mountains, too.

ASTA. [Changing the subject.] My, how nicely you are dressed to-day, Eyolf!

EYOLF. Yes, don't you think so, auntie?

ASTA. Yes, indeed. Is it in honor of Papa that you have got on your new clothes?

EYOLF. Yes, I asked Mama to let me. I wanted Papa to see me in them.

ALLMERS. [In a low voice, to Rita.] You shouldn't have given him clothes of that kind.

RITA. [In a low voice.] Oh, but he bothered me so much about them — he begged so. He gave me no peace.

EYOLF. And I forgot to tell you, Papa — Mr. Borgheim [9] has bought me a bow. And he has taught me how to shoot with it, too.

ALLMERS. Ah, there now — that's just what you like, Eyolf.

EYOLF. And when he comes back next time, then I'll ask him to teach me to swim, too.

ALLMERS. To swim! But why do you want to do that?

EYOLF. Well, you know, all the boys down at the beach, they can swim. I am the only one that can't.

ALLMERS. [With emotion; putting his arms about him.] You shall learn whatever you like — everything you really want to.

EYOLF. Well, do you know what I would like better than anything else, Papa?

ALLMERS. No; tell me.

EYOLF. Best of all, I'd like to learn to be a soldier.

ALLMERS. Oh, little Eyolf, there are so many other things that are better than that.

EYOLF. Yes; but when I grow up, then I *must* be a soldier. You know that, don't you?

ALLMERS. [Clenching his hands together.] Yes, yes, yes; we shall see —

ASTA. [Sits down by the table to the left.] Eyolf! Come over here to me and I'll tell you something.

EYOLF. [Goes over.] What is it, Auntie?

ASTA. What do you think, Eyolf — I have seen the Rat-Wife.

EYOLF. What! Seen the Rat-Wife! Oh, you are only fooling me!

ASTA. No; it's true. I saw her yesterday.

EYOLF. Where did you see her?

ASTA. I saw her on the road, outside the town.

ALLMERS. I saw her, too, somewhere up in the country.

RITA. [Who is sitting on the sofa.] Perhaps we shall get to see her, also, Eyolf.

EYOLF. Auntie, isn't it strange that they call her the Rat-Wife?

ASTA. Oh, people just call her that because she travels about the country driving away all the rats.

ALLMERS. Her real name is Miss Varg, I believe.

EYOLF. Varg? That means a wolf, doesn't it? [10]

ALLMERS. [Patting him on the head.] So you know that, too, do you?

EYOLF. [Thoughtfully.] Then maybe it is true, after all, that she is a were-wolf at night. Do you believe that, Papa?

ALLMERS. Oh, no; I don't believe that. — Now you ought to go out and play a little in the garden.

EYOLF. Don't you think it would be better if I took some books with me?

ALLMERS. No; no books hereafter. You had better go down to the beach to the other boys.

EYOLF. [With embarrassment.] No, Papa; I won't go down to the boys to-day.

ALLMERS. Why not?

EYOLF. No — because I have these clothes on.

ALLMERS. [Knitting his brows.] Do they make fun of — of your nice clothes?

EYOLF. [Evasively.] No, they daren't do that. For then I would beat them.

ALLMERS. Well, then — why — ?

EYOLF. But they are so naughty, those boys. And then they say I can never be a soldier.

ALLMERS. [With suppressed indignation.] Why do they say that, do you think?

EYOLF. I suppose they are jealous of me. Because you know, Papa, they are so poor that they have to go bare-footed.

ALLMERS. [Softly, with choking voice.] Oh, Rita — how this wrings my heart!

RITA. [Soothingly, rising.] There, there, there!

ALLMERS. [Threateningly.] But those boys — they will find out sometime who is the master down at the beach!

ASTA. [Listening.] There is some one knocking.

EYOLF. Oh, I'm sure it's Mr. Borgheim!

RITA. Come in.

[The Rat-Wife comes in, softly and noiselessly, by the door to the right. She is a small, thin, shrunken figure, old and gray-haired, with keen, piercing eyes, dressed in an old-fashioned, flowered gown, with a black hood and cloak. She has in her hand a large red umbrella, and on her arm, by a string, a black bag.]

EYOLF. [Softly, taking hold of Asta's dress.] Auntie! That must surely be her!

THE RAT-WIFE. [Curtseying at the door.] I humbly beg pardon — but are your honors troubled with any gnawing things in the house?

ALLMERS. We? No, I don't think so.

THE RAT-WIFE. Ah; I should so like to help your honors to get rid of them.

RITA. Yes, yes; we understand. But we haven't anything of that kind.

THE RAT-WIFE. That's really most unlucky, for I just happen to be on my rounds. And nobody knows when I'll get back this way again. — Oh, how tired I am!

ALLMERS. [Points to a chair.] Yes, you look it.

THE RAT-WIFE. I know one ought never get tired doing good to the poor little things that are hated and persecuted so cruelly. But it takes your strength out of you.

RITA. Perhaps you will sit down and rest yourself a little?

THE RAT-WIFE. Thank you, many, many times! [Sits down in a chair between the door and the sofa.] I have been out all night on business.

ALLMERS. Have you?

THE RAT-WIFE. Yes, over on the islands. [With a chuckling laugh.] The people sent for me, I can assure you. They hated to do it, but there was nothing else to be done. They had to bite the sour apple.[11] [Looks at Eyolf and nods.] The sour apple, little gentleman, the sour apple!

EYOLF. [Involuntarily, a little timidly.] Why did they have to — ?

THE RAT-WIFE. What?

EYOLF. Bite it?

THE RAT-WIFE. Why, because they couldn't stand it any longer. On account of the rats and all the little rat children, you see, young gentleman.

RITA. Ugh! The poor people! Have they so many of them?

THE RAT-WIFE. Yes, it was all alive and swarming with them. [Laughs with quiet glee.] They came creepy and crawly into the beds all night long. They plumped into the milk-cans, and they went pittering and pattering all over the floor, backwards and forwards.

EYOLF. [Softly, to Asta.] I'll never go out there, Auntie.

THE RAT-WIFE. But then *I* came — and an-

other. And we took them all with us, every one! The sweet little creatures! We made an end of every one of them.

EYOLF. [With a shriek.] Papa — look! look!

RITA. Good Heavens, Eyolf!

ALLMERS. What's the matter?

EYOLF. [Pointing.] There's something wriggling in the bag!

RITA. [At the left, shrieks.] Ugh! Get her out, Alfred!

THE RAT-WIFE. [Laughs.] Oh, dearest, sweetest lady, don't be afraid of such a little creature!

ALLMERS. But what *is* it?

THE RAT-WIFE. Why, it's only little Mopsëman.[12] [Loosening the bag.] Come up out of the darkness, my own darling little friend.

[A little dog with a broad black muzzle sticks its head out of the bag.]

THE RAT-WIFE. [Nods and beckons to Eyolf.] Come along, don't be afraid, my little wounded warrior! He won't bite. Come here! Come here!

EYOLF. [Clinging to Asta.] No, I dare not.

THE RAT-WIFE. Doesn't the young gentleman think that he has a gentle and lovable face?

EYOLF. [Astonished, points.] That thing *there?*

THE RAT-WIFE. Yes; he.

EYOLF. [Half under his breath, staring fixedly at the dog.] I think he has the worst — face I ever saw.

THE RAT-WIFE. [Closes the bag.] Oh, it will come — it will surely come.

EYOLF. [Involuntarily drawing nearer, he at last goes all the way and lightly strokes the bag.] Lovely! — He is lovely all the same!

THE RAT-WIFE. [In a tender tone.] But now he is so tired and weary, poor thing! He is so terribly tired. [Looks at Allmers.] For it takes the strength out of you — that sort of game, I can tell you, sir.

ALLMERS. What sort of game do you mean?

THE RAT-WIFE. The luring game.

ALLMERS. Aha! Then, perhaps, it's the dog that lures the rats?

THE RAT-WIFE. [Nods.] Mopsëman and I — we two do it together. And it goes so smoothly — that is, it *looks* that way. I just slip a string through his collar. Then I lead him three times around the house. And play on my mouth harp.[18] When they hear *that,* then they *must* come

up from the cellars and down from the garrets and out from the holes — all the blessed little creatures!

EYOLF. And does he bite them to death then?

THE RAT-WIFE. Oh, not at all! No, we go down to the boat, he and I. And then they follow after us. Both the big ones and their little ones.

EYOLF. [Eagerly.] And what then — ? Tell me!

THE RAT-WIFE. Then we push out from the land. And I scull with one oar and play on my mouth-harp. And Mopsëman, he swims behind. [With glittering eyes.] And all the creepers and crawlers, they follow and follow us out into the deep, deep water. Yes, because they *must!*

EYOLF. Why *must* they?

THE RAT-WIFE. Just because they don't *want* to. Because they are so terribly afraid of the water. — That's why they must plunge into it.

EYOLF. Do they drown, then?

THE RAT-WIFE. Every solitary one. [More softly.] And there they have it all as still, and soft, and dark as their hearts can wish it — the lovely little things! Down there they sleep such a sweet and such a long sleep! All those that people hate and persecute! [Rises.] Yes, in the old days

I didn't need any Mopsëman. Then I lured them myself. I alone!

EYOLF. *What* did you lure?

THE RAT-WIFE. Men. One most of all.

EYOLF. [Excitedly.] Oh, tell me, who was that one?

THE RAT-WIFE. [Laughs.] That was my sweetheart, little heart-breaker!

EYOLF. And where is he now?

THE RAT-WIFE. [Harshly.] Down with all the rats! [Again gently.] But now I must get off to business again. Always on the go. [To Rita.] Have your honors really no use for me to-day? I could finish it up right now.

RITA. No, thank you; I don't think it's necessary.

THE RAT-WIFE. Well, well, sweet lady — you never can tell. If your honors should notice that there is anything here that keeps nibbling and gnawing, and creeping and crawling — then you want to get hold of me and Mopsëman. — Good-bye, good-bye, many thousand times.

[She goes out by the door to the right.]

EYOLF. [Softly and triumphantly, to Asta.] Auntie, just think that *I*, too, have seen the Rat-Wife!

[RITA goes out upon the veranda and fans herself with her handkerchief. Shortly afterward, Eyolf slips out to the right, cautiously and unnoticed.]

ALLMERS. [Takes up the portfolio from the table by the sofa.] Is this your portfolio, Asta?

ASTA. Yes. I have some of the old letters in it.

ALLMERS. Ah, the family letters —

ASTA. You remember you asked me to put them in order for you while you were away.

ALLMERS. [Pats her on the head.] And you have found time for *that?*

ASTA. Oh, yes. I have done it partly out here and partly at home in town.

ALLMERS. Thanks, dear. — Did you find anything particular in them?

ASTA. [Lightly.] Oh, you know you always find something or other in such old papers. [More softly and seriously.] There in the portfolio are the letters to mother.

ALLMERS. Well, those, of course, you must keep yourself.

ASTA. [With an effort.] No; I want you to look through them, too, Alfred. Some time — later on in life. — To-day I haven't got the key to the portfolio with me.

ALLMERS. No need of it, my dear Asta, for I shall never read your mother's letters anyhow.

ASTA. [Fixes her eyes upon him.] Then some time or other — some snug evening — I'll tell you a little of what is in them.

ALLMERS. Yes, I'd rather have it that way. But you keep your mother's letters. You haven't so many mementoes of her.

[He hands Asta the portfolio. She takes it and lays it on the chair under her outdoor things. Rita comes into the room again.]

RITA. Ugh! I feel as if that uncanny old woman had brought a sort of graveyard smell with her.

ALLMERS. Yes, she was rather uncanny.

RITA. I felt almost sick while she was in the room.

ALLMERS. However, I can well understand the luring and compelling fascination that she talked about. The loneliness of the mountain peaks and of the great open spaces has something of the same thing about it.

ASTA. [Looks at him attentively.] What is it that has come over you, Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Smiles.] Over me?

ASTA. Yes, there *is* something — almost like a transformation. Rita has noticed it, too.

RITA. Yes, I saw it the moment you came. A change for the better, I hope, Alfred?

ALLMERS. It *ought* to be for the better. And it must and shall be for the better.

RITA. [Exclaiming.] Something has happened on your trip! Don't deny it! I can see it on you!

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] Nothing in the world — outwardly. But —

RITA. [Eagerly.] But — ?

ALLMERS. Inwardly, it is true, there has been something of a revolution.

RITA. Oh, Heavens — !

ALLMERS. [Soothingly, patting her hand.] Only for the better, my dear Rita. You may be quite sure of that.

RITA. [Seats herself on the sofa.] You must tell us all about it at once — all of it!

ALLMERS. [Turning to Asta.] Yes, let us sit down, too. Then I will try to tell you — as well as I can.

[He sits on the sofa beside Rita. Asta moves a chair forward and places herself near him. A brief pause.]

RITA. [Looks at him expectantly.] Well — ?

ALLMERS. [Gazing straight before him.] When I look back over my life — and my fate — for the last ten or eleven years, it all seems to me like a fairy-tale or dream. Don't you think so, too, Asta?

ASTA. Yes, in many ways I think so.

ALLMERS. [Continuing.] When I remember what we two used to be, Asta — we two poor orphan children —

RITA. [Impatiently.] Oh, yes; but that's such a long time ago.

ALLMERS. [Not listening to her.] And now I sit here in comfort and luxury. I have been able to follow my vocation. I have been able to work and study — just as I was inclined. [Holds out his hand.] And all this great — this fabulous good fortune — we owe that to you — you, my dear Rita.

RITA. [Half playful, half provoked, she slaps his hand.] Oh, I do wish you would stop that nonsense.

ALLMERS. I mention it only as a sort of introduction.

RITA. Well, then, skip that introduction!

ALLMERS. Rita — you must not think it was

the advice of the doctor that sent me up into the mountains.

ASTA. Wasn't it, Alfred?

RITA. What was it that sent you?

ALLMERS. It was *this:* I found there was no more peace for me at my work-table.

RITA. No peace? Why, who disturbed you?

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] No one from without. But I felt as if I were positively abusing — or rather say, wasting — my best powers — that I was frittering away the time.

ASTA. [With wide eyes.] When you were writing your book?

ALLMERS. [Nods.] For I believe that my powers are not confined to *that* alone. Certainly I must be able to achieve something else beside.

RITA. Was *that* what you sat and brooded over?

ALLMERS. Yes; mainly that.

RITA. And that's why you have become so dissatisfied with yourself of late, and with the rest of us as well. For you have been dissatisfied, Alfred.

ALLMERS. [Gazes straight before him.] There I sat, bent over my table, writing day after day, and often half the night, too — writing and writing

at the great, thick book, "Human Responsibility." H'm!

ASTA. [Lays her hand upon his arm.] But, dear — that book is to be your life-work.

RITA. Yes, surely you have said so often enough.

ALLMERS. I thought so. Ever since I grew up. [With an affectionate expression in his eyes.] Then you made it possible for me to start, my dear Rita —

RITA. Oh, nonsense!

ALLMERS. [Smiles upon her.] — You, with your gold and green forests — [14]

RITA. [Half laughing, half vexed.] If you begin all that nonsense again, I'll beat you.

ASTA. [Looks at him sorrowfully.] But the book, Alfred?

ALLMERS. It began, as it were, to drift away from me. But more and more rose the thought of the higher duties which laid their claim upon me.

RITA. [Beaming, seizes his hand.] Alfred.

ALLMERS. The thought of Eyolf, my dear Rita.

RITA. [Disappointed, drops his hand.] Ah — of Eyolf!

ALLMERS. Poor little Eyolf has taken deeper and deeper hold of me. After that unhappy fall from the table — and especially since we have been sure that it is without remedy —

RITA. [Insistently.] But you take care of him all you possibly can, Alfred!

ALLMERS. As a schoolmaster, yes; but not as a father. And it is a father that I want to be to Eyolf hereafter.

RITA. [Looks at him and shakes her head.] I don't think I quite understand you.

ALLMERS. I mean that I want to try with all my power to make that which is without remedy as painless and easy to him as it can possibly be.

RITA. Oh, but, dear — thank Heaven, I don't think that he feels it so deeply.

ASTA. [With emotion.] Yes, Rita, he does.

ALLMERS. Yes, you may be sure that he feels it deeply.

RITA. [Impatiently.] But, dear — what more can you do for him?

ALLMERS. I will try to give reality to all the rich possibilities that are dawning in his childish soul. All the germs of nobility that are in him I want to bring to growth — to flower and fruit. [With more and more warmth, rising.] And I want to do more than *that*. I want to bring his desires into harmony with the attainable. They are not so *now*. All his longings are for things that must remain unattainable for him his whole life

long. I want to create a conscious happiness in his mind.

[He goes up and down the floor several times. Asta and Rita follow him with their eyes.]

RITA. You should take such matters more calmly, Alfred.

ALLMERS. [Stops beside the table to the left and looks at them.] Eyolf shall take up my life-work — if he wants to. Or he shall choose one that is altogether his own. Rather *that,* perhaps. Well, at all events, I shall let mine rest as it is.

RITA. [Rising.] But, dearest Alfred — can't you work both for yourself and for Eyolf?

ALLMERS. No, I can't do that. Impossible! I can't divide myself — and therefore I shall step down. Eyolf shall be the full and complete man of our race. And it shall be my new life work to make him that full and complete man.

ASTA. [Has risen and now goes over to him.] This has cost you a terribly hard struggle, Alfred?

ALLMERS. Yes, it has. Here at home, I should never have conquered myself — never forced myself to the point of renunciation. Never at home!

RITA. Then that was why you went away this summer?

ALLMERS. [With shining eyes.] Yes! I went

up into the infinite solitudes. I saw the sunrise gleaming on the peaks. I felt myself nearer the stars — almost in harmony and communion with them. And then I could do it.

ASTA. [Looking at him sadly.] But nevermore will you resume your book on "Human Responsibility"?

ALLMERS. No, never, Asta. I tell you I can't split up myself between two tasks. But I will act out my "human responsibility" — in my own life.

RITA. [With a smile.] Do you really think that you can live up to such high resolves here at home?

ALLMERS. [Takes her hand.] With you beside me, I can. [Holds out the other hand.] And with you beside me, too, Asta.

RITA. [Draws her hand away.] With both of us? Then you *can* divide yourself.

ALLMERS. But, my dearest Rita — !

[Rita goes away from him and stands in the garden doorway. A light and rapid knock is heard at the door on the right. Engineer Borgheim enters briskly. He is a young man of a little over thirty. His expression is bright and frank, and he holds himself erect.]

BORGHEIM. Good morning, good morning, Mrs.

Allmers! [Stops with an expression of pleasure on catching sight of Allmers.] Well, well, what do I see? Home again already, Mr. Allmers?

ALLMERS. [Shaking hands with him.] Yes, I arrived last night.

RITA. [Gaily.] His leave of absence was up, Mr. Borgheim.

ALLMERS. But that isn't true, Rita —

RITA. [Approaching.] Yes, certainly it is true. His furlough had run out.

BORGHEIM. So you hold a tight rein on your husband, Mrs. Allmers?

RITA. I stand on my rights. And surely everything must have an end.

BORGHEIM. Oh, not everything — I hope. — Good morning, Miss Allmers.

ASTA. [Aloofly.] Good morning.

RITA. [Looking at Borgheim.] Not everything, you say?

BORGHEIM. Oh, I believe fully and firmly that there are *some* things in the world which ~~have~~ no end.

RITA. Now I believe you are thinking of love — and that sort of thing.

BORGHEIM. [With warmth.] I am thinking of all that is beautiful!

RITA. And that never comes to an end. Yes, let us think of that — hope for it, all of us!

ALLMERS. [Steps closer to them.] I suppose you will soon finish your road-work out here?

BORGHEIM. I *have* finished it — finished it yesterday. It has lasted long enough, but, thank Heaven, it has come to an end!

RITA. And that's what you are so gleeful about?

BORGHEIM. Yes, I am indeed!

RITA. Well, I *must* say —

BORGHEIM. What, Mrs. Allmers?

RITA. That isn't very nice of you, Mr. Borgheim.

BORGHEIM. Is that so? Why not?

RITA. I suppose you won't come out this way very often.

BORGHEIM. No, that is true. I didn't think of that.

RITA. Oh well, I suppose you will manage to come out to see us once in a while.

BORGHEIM. No, unfortunately that will be impossible for a long while.

ALLMERS. Indeed! How so?

BORGHEIM. I have got a big piece of new work and I must go ahead with it at once.

ALLMERS. Have you indeed? [Pressing his hand.] I am heartily glad of it.

RITA. Congratulations, congratulations, Mr. Borgheim!

BORGHEIM. Hush, hush! — I really have no right to mention it yet. But I couldn't help coming out with it. — It's a difficult piece of road-work — up in the north — with mountain passes — and the most incredible difficulties to conquer! [Exclaiming.] Oh, you great, splendid world! What a joy it is to be a road builder!

RITA. [Smiles and looks at him teasingly.] Is it nothing but road-making that brought you out here to-day so mad with joy?

BORGHEIM. No, not that alone. I am thinking of all the bright and promising prospects that open out before me.

RITA. [As before.] Aha! Perhaps there is something still more splendid in reserve!

BORGHEIM. [Glancing toward Asta.] Who knows? When happiness comes at last, it often comes like a spring flood. [Turns to Asta.] Miss Allmers, let us take a little walk, as we used to.

ASTA. [Quickly.] No, no; thank you. Not now. Not to-day.

BORGHEIM. Oh, come along! Just a little bit

of a walk! It seems to me I have so much to talk over with you before I go.

RITA. Something else, perhaps, that you have no right to mention yet.

BORGHEIM. H'm, that depends upon —

RITA. You may whisper, you know. [Half aside.] Asta, really you must go with him.

ASTA. But, my dear Rita —

BORGHEIM. [Imploringly.] Miss Asta — remember that this will be our farewell walk — for a long, long while.

ASTA. [Takes her hat and parasol.] Very well. Suppose we take a stroll in the garden, then.

BORGHEIM. Oh, thanks! Thanks for that!

ALLMERS. And look after Eyolf a bit at the same time.

BORGHEIM. Yes, Eyolf, that's true! Where is Eyolf to-day? I have something for him.

ALLMERS. He is playing somewhere down there.

BORGHEIM. Is he really? Then he has begun to play now? He used to sit inside all the time and read.

ALLMERS. There is to be an end of that now. He is to become a real open-air boy.

BORGHEIM. Well, now, that's right! Out into

the open air with him, poor little fellow! Good Lord, there's nothing better than play in this blessed world! It seems to me that life is one long play-time! — Come along, Miss Asta!

[Borgheim and Asta go out on the veranda and down through the garden.]

ALLMERS. [Stands looking after them.] I say, Rita — do you believe there is anything between these two?

RITA. I hardly know what to say. I used to think there was. But Asta has grown so strange — so utterly incomprehensible of late.

ALLMERS. Indeed! Has she? While I have been away?

RITA. Yes, within the last few weeks, it seems to me.

ALLMERS. And you don't believe that she cares much for him any longer?

RITA. Not seriously; not wholly and fully; not unreservedly — that I don't believe. [Looks at him searchingly.] Would it displease you if she did?

ALLMERS. It would not exactly displease me. But it would undoubtedly be a disquieting thought —

RITA. Disquieting?

ALLMERS. Yes; because you must remember that I am responsible for Asta — for her life's happiness.

RITA. Oh, well — responsible? Certainly Asta is grown up. I should say she knew how to choose for herself.

ALLMERS. Yes, we must hope so, Rita.

RITA. For my part, I don't think badly of Borgheim.

ALLMERS. No, dear — neither do I — on the contrary. But nevertheless —

RITA. [Continuing.] And I should very much like to see him and Asta make a match of it.

ALLMERS. [Displeased.] Why should you?

RITA. [With growing excitement.] Because then she would have to go far away with him! And she could never come out here to see us, as she does now.

ALLMERS. [Stares at her in astonishment.] What! Do you really wish to get rid of Asta?

RITA. Yes, yes, Alfred.

ALLMERS. But why in the world —?

RITA. [Throws her arms passionately about his neck.] For then, at last, I should have you for myself alone! And yet — not even then! Not

quite for myself! [Bursts into hysterical weeping.] Oh, Alfred, Alfred — I *cannot* give you up!

ALLMERS. [Gently releasing himself.] But, dearest Rita — be sensible!

RITA. No; I don't care the least bit about being sensible! I only care for you! For you alone in all the world! [Again throws her arms around his neck.] For you, for you, for you!

ALLMERS. Let go, let go! — You are choking me!

RITA. [Letting him go.] I wish I could. [Looks at him with flashing eyes.] Oh, if you knew how I have hated you —!

ALLMERS. Hated me —!

RITA. Yes — when you sat there in your study and brooded over your work — till long, long into the night. [Plaintively.] So long — so late, Alfred! Oh, how I hated your work!

ALLMERS. But now there is an end to it.

RITA. [With a cutting laugh.] Oh, yes! Now you have given yourself up to something worse.

ALLMERS. [Shocked.] Worse! Do you call our child something worse?

RITA. [Vehemently.] Yes, I do! As he comes between us, I call him so. For the child — the child is a living being. [With increasing impetu-

osity.] But I won't endure it, Alfred! I won't endure it — I tell you that!

ALLMERS. [Looks at her steadily, and says in a low voice.] Many a time I am almost afraid of you, Rita.

RITA. [Gloomily.] I am often afraid of myself. And for that very reason you must not arouse the evil in me.

ALLMERS. Yes, but in God's name — do I do so?

RITA. Yes, you do — when you tear to shreds the most sacred bonds between us.

ALLMERS. [Beseechingly.] Think what you are saying, Rita! It's your own child — our only child, that you are speaking of!

RITA. The child is only half mine. [With another outburst.] But *you* must be mine alone! You must be wholly mine! I have a right to demand it of you!

ALLMERS. [Shrugging his shoulders.] Oh, my dear Rita — it's useless to demand anything. Everything must be given voluntarily.

RITA. [Looks at him intently.] And that you can't do hereafter?

ALLMERS. No, I can't. I *must* divide myself between Eyolf and you.

RITA. But if Eyolf had never been born — what then?

ALLMERS. [Evasively.] Oh, that would be another matter. Then I should have only you to care for.

RITA. [Softly, her voice quivering.] Then I wish I had never borne him.

ALLMERS. [Flying up.] Rita! You don't know what you are saying!

RITA. [Trembling with excitement.] I brought him into the world with pain unspeakable. But I suffered it all with joy and rapture for your sake.

ALLMERS. [Warmly.] Oh, yes, yes; that I know.

RITA. [With decision.] But there it must end. I want to *live* — with you — wholly with you! I can't go on being Eyolf's mother — just that and nothing more. I *will* not, I say. I *cannot! I* want to be *everything* to you! To you, Alfred!

ALLMERS. But you *are* that, Rita. Through our child —

RITA. Oh, — nauseous, lukewarm platitudes — not a shred of anything else! No, I tell you, such things are not for me! I was fit to *become* the

child's mother, but not to *be* a mother to him. You must take me as I am, Alfred.

ALLMERS. And yet you used to be so fond of Eyolf.

RITA. I was so sorry for him — because you troubled yourself so little about him.[15] You just let him read and grind away at his books. You scarcely ever looked at him.

ALLMERS. [Nods slowly.] No; I was blind. The time had not yet come for me —

RITA. [Looks at him.] But *now* it has come?

ALLMERS. Yes, now at last. Now I see that the highest duty I can have in the world is to be a true father to Eyolf.

RITA. And to me? What will you be to me?

ALLMERS. [Gently.] I will go on caring for you — with calm devotion. [Tries to take her hands.]

RITA. [Evading him.] I don't care for your calm devotion. I want you utterly and entirely — and alone! Just as I had you in the first glorious, tumultuous days. [Vehemently and harshly.] Never in the world will I be content with scraps and leavings, Alfred!

ALLMERS. [Gently.] I should think there

ought to be happiness in plenty for all three of us, Rita.

RITA. [Scornfully.] Then you are easy to please. [Seats herself beside the table to the left.] Now listen to me.

ALLMERS. [Approaching.] Well, what is it?

RITA. [Looks up to him with a veiled glow in her eyes.] When I got your telegram last night —

ALLMERS. Yes? What then?

RITA. Then I dressed myself in white —

ALLMERS. Yes, I noticed that you were in white when I arrived.

RITA. I had let down my hair —

ALLMERS. Your beautiful, perfumed hair!

RITA. — so that it flowed down over my neck and shoulders —

ALLMERS. I saw it, I saw it! Oh, how beautiful you were, Rita!

RITA. There were rose-red shades over both the lamps. And we were alone, we two — the only waking beings in the house. And there was champagne on the table.

ALLMERS. I didn't drink any of it.

RITA. [Looks at him bitterly.] No, that's true. [Laughs harshly.] "There stood the champagne, but you tasted it not" — as the poet says.[16]

[She rises from the easy chair, and goes with an air of weariness to the sofa, and sits down, half reclining, upon it.]

ALLMERS. [Crosses the floor and stops before her.] I was so full of serious thoughts. I had made up my mind to speak to you about our future, Rita, and first of all about Eyolf.

RITA. [Smiles.] And so you did, dear —

ALLMERS. No, I didn't get to it — because you started to undress.

RITA. Yes, and meanwhile you talked about Eyolf. Don't you remember that? You wanted to know all about little Eyolf's stomach.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her reproachfully.] Rita!

RITA. And then you got into your bed — and went sound to sleep.

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] Rita! — Rita!

RITA. [Lying at full length and looking up at him.] Listen, Alfred!

ALLMERS. Yes?

RITA. "There stood your champagne, but you tasted it not."

ALLMERS. [Almost harshly.] No. I didn't touch it.

[He goes away from her and stands in the garden

door. Rita lies for some time motionless, with closed eyes.]

RITA. [Suddenly springing up.] But I want to tell you one thing, Alfred.

ALLMERS. [Turning in the doorway.] Well?

RITA. You ought not to feel quite so secure!

ALLMERS. Not secure?

RITA. No, you ought not to be so indifferent! Not so sure that you *have* me!

ALLMERS. [Comes closer.] What do you mean by that?

RITA. [With trembling lips.] Never, even in a single thought, have I been untrue to you, Alfred! Never for a moment!

ALLMERS. No, Rita, I know that — I, who know you so well.

RITA. [With sparkling eyes.] But if you disdain me —!

ALLMERS. Disdain? — I don't understand what you mean!

RITA. Oh, you don't know all that might rise in me, if —

ALLMERS. If —?

RITA. If I should ever see that you did not care for me any longer — didn't care for me any longer in the way you used to.

ALLMERS. But, my dearest Rita — a man changes with the years — and that must one day occur in *our* life together, as with all others.

RITA. Never in me! And I will not hear of any change in you either. I couldn't bear it, Alfred! I want to keep you for myself alone.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her with concern.] You have a terribly jealous nature —

RITA. I can't make myself otherwise than as I am. [Threateningly.] If you are going to divide yourself between me and someone else —

ALLMERS. What then —?

RITA. Then I will take revenge on you, Alfred!

ALLMERS. How would you be able to revenge yourself?

RITA. That I don't know — Oh, yes, I do know, well enough!

ALLMERS. Well?

RITA. I will go and throw myself away —

ALLMERS. Throw yourself away, do you say?

RITA. Yes, I will do that. I'll throw myself straight into the arms of — of the first man that comes my way!

ALLMERS. [Looking at her tenderly and shaking his head.] You will never do that — you, my loyal, proud, true-hearted Rita!

RITA. [Puts her arms around his neck.] Oh, you don't know what might become of me if you — if you didn't want me any longer.

ALLMERS. Not want you, Rita? How can you say such a thing?

RITA. [Half laughing, lets him go.] I might lay my snares for him — that road-builder out there.

ALLMERS. [Relieved.] Oh, thank God! — then you are only joking!

RITA. Not at all. Why not him as well as anyone else?

ALLMERS. No; for he is probably already engaged elsewhere.

RITA. So much the better! For then I should take him away from someone else. That is exactly what Eyolf has done to me.

ALLMERS. Can you say our little Eyolf has done *that?*

RITA. [Pointing with her finger.] You see, you see! The moment you mention Eyolf's name you grow tender and your voice quivers. [Threateningly, clenching her hands.] Oh, I could almost be tempted to wish — Oh!

ALLMERS. [Looks at her in fright.] What would you wish, Rita? —

RITA. [Vehemently, going away from him.] No, no, no — I will not tell you! Never!

ALLMERS. [Going closer to her.] Rita, I implore you — for your sake and my own — don't let yourself be tempted into evil.

[Borgheim and Asta come up from the garden. They both show suppressed emotion. They look serious and dejected. Asta remains standing on the veranda. Borgheim comes into the room.]

BORGHEIM. Well! Miss Allmers and I have taken our last walk together.

RITA. [Looks at him in surprise.] Ah! — And there is no longer journey to follow the walk?

BORGHEIM. Yes, for me.

RITA. For you alone?

BORGHEIM. Yes, for me alone.

RITA. [Glancing darkly at Allmers.] Do you hear that, Alfred? [Turns to Borgheim.] I'll bet that some one with the evil eye has played you this trick.

BORGHEIM. [Looking at her.] The evil eye?

RITA. [Nodding.] Yes, the evil eye.

BORGHEIM. Do you believe in the evil eye, Mrs. Allmers?

RITA. Yes, I have begun to believe in the evil eye. Especially in a child's evil eye.

ALLMERS. [Shocked, whispers.] Rita — how can you —!

RITA. [Half audibly.] It is you that have made me evil and ugly, Alfred.

[Confused cries and shrieks are heard in the distance, from the direction of the water.]

BORGHEIM. [Going to the glass door.] What's that noise?

ASTA. [In the doorway.] Look at all those people running down on the pier!

ALLMERS. What can it be? [Looks out for a moment.] Probably those street boys at some of their tricks again.

BORGHEIM. [Crying out, over the veranda railing.] Here, you little boys down there! What's the trouble?

[Several are heard to reply together, indistinctly.]

RITA. What are they saying?

BORGHEIM. They say that a child has drowned.

ALLMERS. A child drowned?

ASTA. [Uneasily.] A little boy, they say.

ALLMERS. Oh, they can swim — every one of them.

RITA. [Shrieks in terror.] Where is Eyolf?

ALLMERS. Be calm — calm! Eyolf is down in the garden playing — of course.

ASTA. No, he wasn't in the garden —!

RITA. [With arms upstretched.] Oh, if it only isn't *he!*

BORGHEIM. [Listens, and calls down.] Whose child is it, do you say?

[Indistinct voices are heard. Borgheim and Asta utter a suppressed cry, and rush out through the garden.]

ALLMERS. [In agony.] It is *not* Eyolf! It is *not* Eyolf, Rita!

RITA. [On the veranda, listening.] Hush! Be quiet! Let me hear what they are saying!

[With a piercing shriek, Rita rushes back into the room.]

ALLMERS. [Following her.] What was it they said?

RITA. [Sinking down beside the easy-chair to the left.] They said: "The crutch is floating!"

ALLMERS. [Almost paralyzed.] No, no, no!

RITA. [Hoarsely.] Eyolf! Eyolf! Oh, but they *must* save him!

ALLMERS. [Half distracted.] They can't fail! So precious a life! So precious a life!

[He rushes down through the garden.]

Second Act

A little narrow glen in Allmers' forest, down by the beach. To the left, lofty old trees overarch the spot. Down the slope in the background a brook comes leaping, and loses itself among the stones at the edge of the forest. A path winds along the brook. To the right there are a few detached trees, through which the fjord may be glimpsed. In front is seen the corner of a boat-house, with a boat drawn up. Under the old trees to the left stands a table, with a bench and a few chairs, all made of thin lengths of unsawed birch. It is a heavy, rainy day, with driving clouds of mist.

Alfred Allmers, dressed as before, sits on the bench, with his arms on the table. His hat lies before him. He stares immovably and absently out over the water.

Presently Asta Allmers comes down the forest path. She carries an open umbrella.

Asta. [Goes quietly and cautiously up to him.] You ought not to sit down here in this gloomy weather, Alfred.

[Allmers nods slowly without answering.]

ASTA. [Closes her umbrella.] I have been looking for you for such a long time.

ALLMERS. [Without expression.] Thank you.

ASTA. [Moves a chair and sits down beside him.] Have you been sitting here long? All the time?

ALLMERS. [Does not answer. In a little while he says] No, I can't conceive it. It seems so utterly impossible — this thing.

ASTA. [Lays her hand sympathetically on his arm.] Poor Alfred!

ALLMERS. [Stares at her.] Is it really true then, Asta? Or have I gone crazy? Or am I only dreaming? Oh, if it were but a dream! Just think how beautiful if I were to waken now!

ASTA. Oh, if I could only waken you!

ALLMERS. [Looking out over the water.] How pitiless the fjord looks to-day, lying so heavy and drowsy! Leaden grey — with glints of yellow — and reflecting the rain clouds!

ASTA. [Imploringly.] Oh, Alfred, don't sit staring out over the fjord!

ALLMERS. [Not heeding her.] On the surface, yes. But in the depths — *there* sweeps the rushing undertow —

ASTA. [In terror.] Oh, for God's sake — don't think of the depths!

ALLMERS. [Looks at her gently.] You believe he is lying just outside here, don't you? But he isn't, Asta. You mustn't believe that. You must remember how fiercely the current sweeps out here — straight to the open sea.

ASTA. [Throws herself upon the table, sobbing, with her hands covering her face.] Oh, God! Oh, God!

ALLMERS. [Heavily.] That is why little Eyolf has got so far — far away from us now.

ASTA. [Looking up at him imploringly.] Oh, Alfred, don't say such things!

ALLMERS. Well, you can reckon it out for yourself — you who are so clever. — In twenty-eight or twenty-nine hours — Let me see —! Let me see —!

ASTA. [Shrieks and stops her ears.] Alfred!

ALLMERS. [Pressing his hand firmly upon the table.] Can you see the sense in such a thing as this?

ASTA. [Looks at him.] As what?

ALLMERS. As this thing that has been done to me and Rita.

ASTA. Sense in that?

ALLMERS. [Impatiently.] Yes, the meaning, I say. For, after all, there must be some meaning in it. Life, existence — this stroke of fate cannot be entirely meaningless, I suppose.

ASTA. Oh, who can say anything sure and certain about these things, my dear Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Laughs bitterly.] No, no; you may be right in that. Perhaps the whole thing is a matter of chance — shaping its own course, like a drifting wreck without a rudder. That may very well be. — At least, it almost seems so.

ASTA. [Thoughtfully.] What if it only seems —?

ALLMERS. [Vehemently.] Ah? Perhaps *you* can unravel it for me? For *I* can't. [More softly.] Here is Eyolf, just about to enter upon conscious life, full of such infinite possibilities — rich possibilities, perhaps: he was to have filled my life with joy and pride. And then it sufficed for a crazy woman to come along — and show a dog in a bag —

ASTA. We don't know how it really happened.

ALLMERS. Yes, we do. The boys saw her row out over the fjord. They saw Eyolf standing alone at the very end of the pier. They saw him staring after her — and then he seemed to turn giddy.

[Trembling.] And then he fell over — and disappeared.

ASTA. Yes, yes. But nevertheless —

ALLMERS. She has dragged him down to the depths — you may be sure of that.

ASTA. But, dear, why should she do that?

ALLMERS. Yes, you see — *that* is the question! Why should she? There is no retribution behind it — nothing to atone for, I mean. Eyolf never did her any harm. He never called names after her; he never threw stones at the dog. Why, he had never set eyes on either her or the dog until yesterday. So there is no retribution. The whole thing is causeless — so thoroughly meaningless, Asta. — And yet the order of the world has need for it.

ASTA. Have you spoken to Rita of these things?

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] It seems to me that I can better speak to you about such things. [Drawing a deep breath.] And about everything else as well.

[Asta takes sewing materials and a little paper parcel out of her pocket. Allmers sits looking on absently.]

ALLMERS. What's that you have there, Asta?

ASTA. [Taking his hat.] A bit of black crepe.

ALLMERS. Oh, what's the use of that?

ASTA. Rita has asked me to do it. May I?

ALLMERS. Oh, yes; as far as I am concerned. [She sews the crepe on his hat.]

ALLMERS. [Sitting and looking at her.] Where is Rita?

ASTA. She is walking about the garden a little, I believe. Borgheim is with her.

ALLMERS. [Slightly surprised.] Indeed! Is Borgheim out here again to-day?

ASTA. Yes. He came by the noon train.

ALLMERS. I didn't expect that.

ASTA. [Sewing.] He was so fond of Eyolf.

ALLMERS. Borgheim is a faithful soul, Asta.

ASTA. [With quiet fervor.] Yes, he is surely faithful. That is certain.

ALLMERS. [Fixing his eyes upon her.] You are really fond of him?

ASTA. Yes, I am.

ALLMERS. And yet you can't make up your mind to —?

ASTA. [Interrupting.] Oh, my dear Alfred, don't talk about *that!*

ALLMERS. Yes, yes; — just tell me why you can't —

ASTA. Oh, no! Please! You really must not

ask me. For it's so painful to me, you see — There now! The hat is done.

ALLMERS. Thanks.

ASTA. And now for the left arm.

ALLMERS. Is that to have crepe on it, too?

ASTA. Yes, that is the custom.

ALLMERS. Well, all right — do as you please.

[She moves closer and begins to sew.]

ASTA. Keep your arm still — so I don't prick you.

ALLMERS. [With a half-smile.] This is just like the old days.

ASTA. Yes, don't you think so?

ALLMERS. When you were a little girl you used to sit like this, mending my clothes.

ASTA. As well as I could.

ALLMERS. The first things you ever sewed for me — that was black crepe, too.

ASTA. Was it?

ALLMERS. Round my student's cap — when father died.

ASTA. Could I sew then? Just think of it — I don't remember.

ALLMERS. Oh, you were so small then.

ASTA. Yes, I was small then.

ALLMERS. And then, two years afterward —

when we lost your mother — then again you sewed a big arm-crepe for me.

ASTA. I thought it was the right thing to do.

ALLMERS. [Patting her hand.] Yes, yes; it was the right thing to do, Asta. — And then when we were left alone in the world, we two — Are you done already?

ASTA. Yes. [Putting her sewing materials together.] After that there really came a beautiful time for us, Alfred — we two alone.

ALLMERS. Yes, it was — hard as we had to toil.

ASTA. *You* toiled.

ALLMERS. [With more life.] Oh, you toiled too, in your way. [Smiles.] You, my dear, faithful — Eyolf.

ASTA. Oh — you mustn't remind me of that foolish nonsense about the name.

ALLMERS. Well, if you had been born a boy, you would have been called Eyolf.

ASTA. Yes, *if!* But then, when you became a student — [Smiling involuntarily.] I wonder how you could be so childish!

ALLMERS. Was it *I* that was childish?

ASTA. Yes, I certainly think so now, as I look back upon it. You were ashamed of having no brother — only a sister.

ALLMERS. No, it was you — *you* who were ashamed.

ASTA. Oh, yes, a little — I, too, perhaps. And then, somehow or other, I was sorry for you —

ALLMERS. Yes, I believe you were. And then you hunted up some of my old boy's clothes —

ASTA. Your nice Sunday clothes — yes. Do you remember the blue blouse and the knickerbockers?

ALLMERS. [His eyes dwelling upon her.] How well I remember you, when you put them on.

ASTA. Yes, but remember that I only did that when we were home alone.

ALLMERS. And how serious we were then, and how important! And I always called you Eyolf.

ASTA. But, Alfred, I hope you have never told Rita this?

ALLMERS. Yes, I believe I did once tell her.

ASTA. Oh, Alfred, how could you do that?

ALLMERS. Well, you see — a man tells his wife everything — almost.

ASTA. Yes, I suppose he does.

ALLMERS. [As if awakening, clutches at his forehead and jumps up.] Oh, how can I sit here and —

ASTA. [Rising, looks at him sorrowfully.] What is the matter?

ALLMERS. He had almost passed away from me. He had passed quite away.

ASTA. Eyolf!

ALLMERS. Here I sat, living in these memories — and he was not in my mind.

ASTA. Yes, Alfred — little Eyolf was behind it all.

ALLMERS. No, he was not. He slipped out of my mind — out of my thoughts. I didn't see him before me one moment as we sat here talking. I forgot him utterly all that time.

ASTA. Oh, but you must take some rest in your sorrow.

ALLMERS. No, no, no! *That* is just what I must not do! I must not! I have no right! I have no heart for it, either! [Goes toward the right, in great excitement.] All my thoughts must be out there, where he lies drifting in the depths!

ASTA. [Following him and holding him.] Alfred — Alfred! Don't go to the fjord!

ALLMERS. I must go out to him! Let me go, Asta! I want to take the boat.

ASTA. [In terror.] Don't go to the fjord, I say!

ALLMERS. [Yielding.] No, no — I will not. Just let me alone.

ASTA. [Leading him to the table.] You *must* rest from your thoughts, Alfred. Come here and sit down.

ALLMERS. [Making as if to sit down on the bench.] Well, well — as you please.

ASTA. No, you must not sit there.

ALLMERS. Yes, let me.

ASTA. No; don't do it. For then you will only sit and look out over — [Forces him down upon a chair, with his back to the right.] There now. Now you are sitting in the right place. [Seats herself upon the bench.] And now we can talk again.

ALLMERS. [Breathing audibly.] It was good to deaden the longing and the sorrow for a moment.

ASTA. You *must* do that, Alfred.

ALLMERS. But don't you think I am terribly weak and unfeeling — to be able to do so?

ASTA. Oh, no. I think it is impossible to keep circling forever around one and the same thought.

ALLMERS. Yes, for me it's impossible. Before you came down, I sat here so unspeakably anguished with this crushing, gnawing sorrow —

ASTA. Yes?

ALLMERS. And can you believe it, Asta —? H'm —

ASTA. Well?

ALLMERS. In the midst of all my anguish, I found myself wondering what we were to have for dinner to-day.

ASTA. [Soothingly.] Well, well, if only there is some rest in it —

ALLMERS. Yes, just think of it — it seemed as if there *was* some rest in it! [Holds out his hand to her across the table.] How good it is that I have you, Asta. I am so glad of that. Glad, glad — in the midst of my sorrow.

ASTA. [Looks at him earnestly.] First and foremost, you should be glad that you have Rita.

ALLMERS. Yes, that goes without saying. But Rita is not of my blood. It's not like having a sister.

ASTA. [Eagerly.] Do you think that, Alfred?

ALLMERS. Yes, *our* family is a thing apart. [Half in jest.] We have always had euphonious initials to our names. Don't you remember how often we used to speak of *that?* And all our relatives — all equally poor. And all have the same sort of eyes.

ASTA. Do you think that I, too, have —

ALLMERS. No, *you* take after your mother entirely. You don't resemble any of the rest of us at all. Not even father. But all the same —

ASTA. All the same —?

ALLMERS. Well, I believe that living together has stamped us, as it were, in each other's image — mentally, I mean.

ASTA. [With warm emotion.] Oh, you must never say that, Alfred. It is only I that have taken my impress from you. And it is to you that I owe everything — every *good* thing in the world.

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] You owe me nothing, Asta. On the contrary —

ASTA. I owe you everything! You must see that yourself. No sacrifice has been too great for you —

ALLMERS. [Interrupting.] Oh, nonsense — sacrifice! Don't talk of such a thing — I have only been fond of you, Asta, ever since you were a little child. [After a short pause.] And then it always seemed to me that I had so much injustice to make up for.

ASTA. [Astonished.] Injustice? *You?*

ALLMERS. Not precisely on my own account. But —

ASTA. [Eagerly.] But —?

ALLMERS. On father's.

ASTA. [Half starting from the bench.] [17] On — father's? [Sits down again.] What do you mean by that, Alfred?

ALLMERS. Father was never really kind to you.

ASTA. [Vehemently.] Oh, don't say that!

ALLMERS. Yes, but it is true. He was not fond of you — not as he should have been.

ASTA. [Evasively.] No, perhaps not as he was fond of *you*. That was only natural.

ALLMERS. [Continues.] And he was often hard to your mother, too — at any rate, in the last years.

ASTA. [Softly.] Mother was so much, much younger than he; remember that.

ALLMERS. Don't you think that they were quite well suited to each other.

ASTA. Perhaps they were not.

ALLMERS. Yes, but still — Father, who otherwise was so gentle and warm-hearted — so kindly toward every one —

ASTA. [Quietly.] Mother, perhaps, was not always as she ought to have been.

ALLMERS. Your mother was not!

ASTA. Perhaps not always.

ALLMERS. Toward father, do you mean?

ASTA. Yes.

ALLMERS. I never noticed anything like that.

ASTA. [Struggling with her tears, rises.] Oh, my dear Alfred — let them rest — those who are gone. [She goes toward the right.]

ALLMERS. [Rises.] Yes, let them rest. [Wrings his hands.] But those who are gone — they don't let *us* rest, Asta. Neither day nor night.

ASTA. [Looks at him warmly.] As time passes everything will seem easier, Alfred.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her helplessly.] Yes, don't you think so, too? — But how shall I get over these terrible first days? [Hoarsely.] — That is what I can't imagine.

ASTA. [Beseechingly, laying her hands on his shoulders.] Go up to Rita. Oh, please do —

ALLMERS. [Vehemently, stepping back from her.] No, no, no — don't talk to me of *that!* For I cannot, you see! [More calmly.] Let me stay here with you.

ASTA. Yes, I shall not leave you.

ALLMERS. [Seizes her hand and holding it fast.] Thank you for that! [Looks out, for a while, out over the fjord.] Where is my little Eyolf now? [Smiles at her sadly.] Can you tell me *that* — my big, wise Eyolf? [Shakes his head.] No one in all the world can tell me that. I only know this one terrible thing — that I have him no longer.

ASTA. [Looks up toward the left and withdraws her hand.] Here they come.

[Mrs. Allmers and Engineer Borgheim come

walking down the forest path, she ahead and he following. She wears a dark dress and a black veil over her head. He has an umbrella under his arm.]

ALLMERS. [Goes toward her.] How is it with you, Rita?

RITA. [Goes by him.] Oh, don't ask.

ALLMERS. Why do you come here?

RITA. Only to look for you. What are you doing?

ALLMERS. Nothing. Asta came down to me.

RITA. Yes, but before Asta came? You have been away from me all the morning.

ALLMERS. I have been sitting here looking out over the water.

RITA. Ugh, — how can you?

ALLMERS. [Impatiently.] I prefer to be alone now.

RITA. [Moves about restlessly.] And then to sit still! To stay in one place!

ALLMERS. I have nothing in the world to move for.

RITA. *I* can't be at peace anywhere. Least of all here — with the fjord right at my feet.

ALLMERS. It is just the nearness of the fjord that —

RITA. [To Borgheim.] Don't *you* think he should go up with the rest of us?

BORGHEIM. [To Allmers.] I believe it would be better for you.

ALLMERS. No, no — let me stay where I am.

RITA. Then I will stay with you, Alfred.

ALLMERS. Very well; do so, then. — You remain, too, Asta.

ASTA. [Whispers to Borgheim.] Let us leave them alone.

BORGHEIM. [With a look of comprehension.] Miss Allmers, let us walk a little further — along the beach. For the very last time?

ASTA. [Taking her umbrella.] Yes, come. Let us go a little further.

[Asta and Borgheim go out together behind the boat house. Allmers wanders about for a while. Then he sits upon a stone under the trees in the foreground to the left.]

RITA. [Comes closer and stands before him, her hands folded and hanging down.] Can you quite grasp the thought, Alfred — that we have lost Eyolf?

ALLMERS. [Looking down sadly.] We shall have to learn to grasp it.

RITA. I can't. I can't. And then that hor-

rible sight — it will rise up before me all my life long.

ALLMERS. [Looking up.] What sight? What have you seen?

RITA. I have seen nothing myself. I have only heard it told. Oh —!

ALLMERS. You may as well tell me at once.

RITA. I got Borgheim to go down with me to the pier —

ALLMERS. What did you want there?

RITA. To question the boys as to how it happened.

ALLMERS. But we know that.

RITA. We got to know more.

ALLMERS. Well?

RITA. It is not true that he disappeared all at once.

ALLMERS. Do they say *that* now?

RITA. Yes. They say that they saw him lying down on the bottom. Deep down in the clear water.

ALLMERS. [Grinding his teeth.] And they didn't save him?

RITA. I suppose they couldn't.

ALLMERS. They could swim — all of them. Did they say how he was lying while they could see him?

RITA. Yes. They said he was lying on his back. And with great, open eyes.

ALLMERS. Open eyes? But quite still?

RITA. Yes, quite still. And then something came and swept him out. They called it the undertow.

ALLMERS. [Nodding slowly.] That, then, was the last they saw of him.

RITA. [Choked with tears.] Yes.

ALLMERS. [In a hollow voice.] And never — never will any one see him again!

RITA. [Moaning.] Day and night he will be before me, as he lay down there.

ALLMERS. With great, open eyes.

RITA. [Shuddering.] Yes, with great, open eyes. I see them! I see them before me!

ALLMERS. [Rises slowly and looks with quiet menace at her.] Were they evil, those eyes, Rita?

RITA. [Turning pale.] Evil —!

ALLMERS. [Going up close to her.] Were they evil eyes that stared up? Up from the depths?

RITA. [Shrinking from him.] Alfred —!

ALLMERS. [Following her.] Answer me that! Were they a child's evil eyes?

RITA. [Screams.] Alfred! Alfred!

ALLMERS. Now things have come about — just as you wished, Rita.

RITA. *I!* What did *I* wish?

ALLMERS. That Eyolf were not here.

RITA. Never in the world did I wish that! That Eyolf shouldn't stand between us — *that* was what I wished.

ALLMERS. Well — after this he will not do it any longer.

RITA. [In a low voice, staring straight before her.] Perhaps more than ever. [With a tremor.] Oh, that horrible sight!

ALLMERS. [Nods.] The child's evil eyes — — yes!

RITA. [In terror, shrinking from him.] Let me be, Alfred! I am afraid of you. I have never seen you like this before.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her, hard and cold.] Sorrow makes us wicked and ugly.

RITA. [Terrified, and yet defiant.] I feel that also — I, too.

[Allmers goes toward the right and looks out over the fjord. Rita seats herself at the table. A brief pause.]

ALLMERS. [Turning his head toward her.] You never loved him, wholly and fully — never!

RITA. [With cold self-control.] Eyolf would never let me take him wholly and fully to my heart.

ALLMERS. Because you didn't want to.

RITA. Oh, yes. I was more than eager. But some one stood in the way — even from the first.

ALLMERS. [Turning 'round.] Do you mean that *I* stood in the way?

RITA. Oh, no — not at first.

ALLMERS. [Comes closer.] Who, then?

RITA. His aunt.

ALLMERS. Asta?

RITA. Yes. Asta stood and barred the way for me.

ALLMERS. Can you say that, Rita?

RITA. Yes. Asta — she took him to her heart — from the moment that happened — that unhappy fall.

ALLMERS. If she did so, she did it in love.

RITA. [Vehemently.] That is just it! I cannot endure sharing anything with anyone! Not in love.

ALLMERS. We two should have shared him between us in love.

RITA. [Looks at him scornfully.] We? Oh, the truth is that you have never had any real love for him, either.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her in surprise.] *I* have not —!

RITA. No, you have not. At first you were so wholly taken up by that book — about Responsibility.

ALLMERS. [Forcibly.] Yes, I was. But just that — that I sacrificed for Eyolf's sake.

RITA. Not out of love for him.

ALLMERS. Why, then, do you suppose?

RITA. Because you were consumed with mistrust of yourself. Because you had begun to doubt whether you had any great vocation to live for in the world.

ALLMERS. [Scrutinizingly.] Could you notice anything of that sort in me?

RITA. Oh, yes — little by little. And then you needed something new to fill your life. — It seems that *I* was no longer enough for you.

ALLMERS. That is the law of change, Rita.

RITA. *Therefore* you wanted to make a prodigy of poor little Eyolf.

ALLMERS. That was not what I wanted. I wanted to make a happy human being out of him. That alone was what I wanted.

RITA. But not out of love for him. Look into yourself! [With shyness showing in her face.]

Search out everything that lies underneath — and behind.

ALLMERS. [Avoiding her eyes.] There is something you shrink from saying.

RITA. You, too.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her thoughtfully.] If it is as you say, then we two have never really possessed our own child.

RITA. No. Not in perfect love.

ALLMERS. And yet we sit here and mourn for him so bitterly.

RITA. [Bitterly.] Yes, isn't it strange to think of! To sit here and mourn over a little stranger boy!

ALLMERS. [With an outburst.] Oh, don't call him a stranger!

RITA. [Shaking her head sadly.] We never won the boy, Alfred. Not I — nor you.

ALLMERS. [Wringing his hands.] And now it is too late! Too late!

RITA. And so thoroughly bare of consolation — everything!

ALLMERS. [Suddenly flaring up.] *You* are the guilty one here.

RITA. [Rising.] *I!*

ALLMERS. Yes, *you!* It was *your* fault that he

became — what he was! It was *your* fault that he couldn't help himself out of the water.

RITA. [With a warding-off gesture.] Alfred — you *shall* not throw the blame upon me!

ALLMERS. [More and more beside himself.] Yes, yes, I do! It was you that left the tiny baby unwatched upon the table.

RITA. He was lying so comfortably among the cushions and sleeping so soundly. And you had promised to look after him.

ALLMERS. Yes, I had. [Lowers his voice.] But then you came — you, you, you — and lured me to you.

RITA. [Looks at him defiantly.] Oh, rather admit that you forgot the child and everything else.

ALLMERS. [With suppressed rage.] Yes, that is true. [Lower.] I forgot the child — in your arms!

RITA. [Exasperated.] Alfred! Alfred! This is abominable of you!

ALLMERS. [In a low voice, clenching his hands before her.] In that hour you passed a sentence of death upon little Eyolf.

RITA. [Wildly.] You, too! You, too! — if it is as you say!

ALLMERS. Oh, yes — call me to account, too — if you will. We have sinned — both of us. — And so, after all, there *was* retribution in Eyolf's death.

RITA. Retribution?

ALLMERS. [With more self-control.] Yes. Judgment upon you and me. Now, as we stand here, we have our deserts. While he lived, we let ourselves shrink away from him in secret, cowardly remorse. We could not endure to see it — the thing he had to drag with him —

RITA. [In a low voice.] The crutch.

ALLMERS. Yes, that. And now that which we call sorrow and heartache — is the gnawing of conscience, Rita. Nothing else.

RITA. [Gazes at him helplessly.] I feel as if all this must end in despair — end in madness for both of us. For, remember, we can never — never make it good again.

ALLMERS. [In a calmer mood.] I dreamed about Eyolf last night. It seemed to me that I saw him come up from the pier. He could run like other boys. So nothing had happened to him — neither the one thing nor the other. The torturing reality was only a dream, I thought. Oh, how I thanked and blessed — [Checking himself.] H'm!

RITA. [Looking at him.] Whom?

ALLMERS. [Evasively.] Whom —?

RITA. Yes; whom did you thank and bless?

ALLMERS. [Parrying the question.] I was only dreaming, you know —

RITA. One in whom you yourself don't believe?

ALLMERS. Well, that was how I felt, at any rate. Remember, I was asleep —

RITA. [Reproachfully.] You should not have made me doubt, Alfred.

ALLMERS. Would it have been right of me to let you go through life believing in empty fictions?

RITA. It would have been better for me. For then I should have had something to take refuge in. Now I am sitting here and don't know which way to turn.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her sharply.] Suppose you had the choice — If you could follow Eyolf there, where he is now —?

RITA. Yes? What then?

ALLMERS. If you had full certainty that you would find him again — know him — understand him —?

RITA. Yes, yes; what then?

ALLMERS. Would you then, of your own free

will, take the leap over to him? Of your own free will go away from all this? Renounce your whole earthly life? Would you, Rita?

RITA. [In a low voice.] Now? At once?

ALLMERS. Yes; to-day. This very hour. Answer me — would you?

RITA. [Hesitating.] Oh, I don't know, Alfred — No! I think I should want to stay here with you, a little while.

ALLMERS. For my sake?

RITA. Yes, only for your sake.

ALLMERS. But afterward? Would you then —? Answer!

RITA. Oh, what can I answer? I simply *could* not go away from you! Never! Never!

ALLMERS. But suppose *I* went to Eyolf? And you had the fullest certainty that you would meet both him and me there? Would you then come over to us?

RITA. I should want to — oh, so much! so much! But —

ALLMERS. Well?

RITA. [Moaning softly.] I could not — I feel it! No, no; I never could! Not for all the glory of heaven!

ALLMERS. Nor I.

RITA. No, isn't it true, Alfred? You couldn't do it, either?

ALLMERS. No. For it is here, in this earthly life, that we living beings belong.

RITA. Yes, here is the sort of happiness that we understand.

ALLMERS. [Darkly.] Oh, happiness — happiness —

RITA. You mean that happiness — that we shall never find it again? [Looks at him inquiringly.] But if—? [Vehemently.] No, no; I dare not say it! Nor even think it!

ALLMERS. Yes, say it — say it, Rita!

RITA. [Hesitatingly.] Could we not try to —? Would it not be possible to forget him?

ALLMERS. Forget Eyolf?

RITA. Forget the remorse and the anguish, I mean.

ALLMERS. Can you wish it?

RITA. Yes, — if it were possible. [With an outburst.] For this — this I can't endure in the long run. Oh, can't we think of something that will bring us forgetfulness!

ALLMERS. [Shakes his head.] What could that be?

RITA. Couldn't we try travelling — far away?

ALLMERS. From home? You, who are never really well anywhere but here?

RITA. Well, then, let us have plenty of people here. Keep open house. Plunge ourselves into something that may deaden and dull our thoughts.

ALLMERS. Such a life would be impossible for me — No, — rather than that, I would try to take up my work again.

RITA. [In a sharp tone.] Your work? The work that has so often stood like a dead wall between us?

ALLMERS. [Slowly, looking at her fixedly.] There must always be a dead wall between us after this.

RITA. Why must there —?

ALLMERS. Who knows but that a child's great, open eyes are watching us night and day.

RITA. [Softly, shuddering.] Alfred — how terrible to think of!

ALLMERS. Our love has been like a consuming fire. Now it must be quenched —

RITA. [Moving toward him.] Quenched!

ALLMERS. [In a hard voice.] It *is* quenched — in one of us.

RITA. [As if petrified.] And you dare say *that* to me!

ALLMERS. [More gently.] It is dead, Rita. But in what I now feel for you — in our common guilt and yearning for atonement — in that I glimpse a sort of resurrection —

RITA. [Violently.] Oh, I don't care for any resurrection!

ALLMERS. Rita!

RITA. I am a warm-blooded human being! I don't go drowsing about — with fish blood in my veins! [Wringing her hands.] And now to be barred in for life — in anguish and remorse! Barred in with one who is no longer mine, ~~mine, mine~~!

ALLMERS. It must have ended so, sometime, Rita.

RITA. Must have ended *so!* That which began between us with such responsive love!

ALLMERS. *My* love was not responsive from the beginning.

RITA. What did you feel for me at first.

ALLMERS. Fear.

RITA. That I can understand. How was it, then, that I won you, after all?

ALLMERS. [In a low voice.] You were so entrancingly beautiful, Rita.

RITA. [Looks at him searchingly.] Then it was that alone? Say it, Alfred! That alone?

ALLMERS. [Conquering himself with an effort.] No, there was something beside.

RITA. [With an outburst.] I can guess what that was! It was my "gold and green forests," as you say. Was that it, Alfred?

ALLMERS. Yes.

RITA. [Looks at him with deep reproach.] How could you — how could you!

ALLMERS. I had Asta to think of.

RITA. [Vehemently.] Asta, yes! [Bitterly.] So it was really Asta that brought us two together?

ALLMERS. She knew nothing about it. She has no suspicion of it, even to this day.

RITA. [Parrying.] It was Asta, all the same! [Smiles, with a scornful, sidelong look.] Or, no — it was little Eyolf! Little Eyolf!

ALLMERS. Eyolf —?

RITA. You used to call her Eyolf, didn't you? It seems to me that you said so once — in a sacred hour. [Goes closer.] Do you remember it — that entrancingly beautiful hour, Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Recoiling, as if in horror.] I remember nothing! I *will* remember nothing!

RITA. [Following after him.] It was in that hour — when your other little Eyolf became a cripple!

ALLMERS. [In a hollow voice, supporting himself by the table.] Retribution!

RITA. [Menacingly.] Yes, retribution!

[Asta and Borgheim come back by way of the boat house. She is carrying some water lilies in her hand.]

RITA. [With self-control.] Well, Asta, — I suppose you and Mr. Borgheim have talked things thoroughly over?

ASTA. Oh, yes — pretty well.

[She puts down her umbrella and lays the flowers on a chair.]

BORGHEIM. Miss Allmers has been very silent during our walk.

RITA. Has she, really? Well, Alfred and I have talked things over thoroughly enough —

ASTA. [Looks intently at both of them.] What is this —?

RITA. Enough to last our lifetime, I should say. [Breaking off.] But come, let us go up — all four of us. We must have company about us in future. Alfred and I can't go on alone.

ALLMERS. Yes, just go ahead, you two. [Turning.] But I must speak a word with you first, Asta.

RITA. [Looking at him.] Indeed? Well, then, come along with me, Mr. Borgheim.

[Rita and Borgheim go up the forest path.]

ASTA. [In fear.] Alfred, what is the matter?

ALLMERS. [Darkly.] Simply this: that I can't endure it any longer out here.

ASTA. Here? With Rita, do you mean?

ALLMERS. Yes. Rita and I can't go on living together.

ASTA. [Shaking him by the arm.] Oh, Alfred — don't say such a terrible thing!

ALLMERS. What I say is true. We are making each other wicked and ugly.

ASTA. [Painfully moved.] Oh, never — never have I dreamt of anything like this!

ALLMERS. I didn't realize it either, until today.

ASTA. And now you want to —! What is it you really want to do, Alfred?

ALLMERS. I want to get away from it all — far away from all of it.

ASTA. And to be quite alone in the world?

ALLMERS. [Nods.] As I used to be — yes.

ASTA. But you are not fitted for living alone.

ALLMERS. Oh, yes. Once I was, at any rate.

ASTA. Yes, once. But then you had *me* with you.

ALLMERS. [Trying to take her hand.] Yes.

And it is to you, Asta, that I now want to come home again.

ASTA. [Evading him.] To me? No, no, Alfred! That is so utterly impossible.

ALLMERS. [Looks sadly at her.] So Borgheim stands in the way, after all?

ASTA. [Eagerly.] No, no; he doesn't! You are mistaken in that!

ALLMERS. Good. Then I will come to you — my dear, dear sister. I *must* come back to you — home to you, to be purified and ennobled after my life with —

ASTA. [Shocked.] Alfred — you are sinning against Rita!

ALLMERS. I *have* sinned against her. But not in this. Oh, just look back on it, Asta — our life together! Wasn't it like one long holy-day from first to last?

ASTA. Yes, it was, Alfred. But all that we can't live over again.

ALLMERS. [Bitterly.] Do you mean that marriage has so irreparably ruined me?

ASTA. [Quietly.] No, I don't mean that.

ALLMERS. Well, then we two will live our old life over again.

ASTA. [Determined.] We cannot, Alfred.

ALLMERS. Yes, we can. For the love of a brother and sister —

ASTA. [Intently.] What of it?

ALLMERS. That is the only human relation that is not subject to the law of change.

ASTA. [Softly and quiveringly.] But if that relation were not —?

ALLMERS. Were not?

ASTA. — not *our* relation?

ALLMERS. [Stares at her in astonishment.] Not *ours?* What do you mean by that?

ASTA. It is best that I should tell you at once, Alfred.

ALLMERS. Yes, yes; tell me!

ASTA. The letters to mother — those in the portfolio —

ALLMERS. Well?

ASTA. You must read them — when I am gone.

ALLMERS. Why must I do that?

ASTA. [Struggling with herself.] For then you will see that —

ALLMERS. Well?

ASTA. — that I have no right to bear — your father's name.

ALLMERS. [Staggering backward.] Asta! What is it you are saying?

ASTA. Read the letters. Then you will see — and understand. And perhaps have some forgiveness — for mother, too.

ALLMERS. [Clutches his head.] I can't conceive this — I can't grasp the thought. You, Asta — you are not —

ASTA. You are not my brother, Alfred.

ALLMERS. [Quickly, half defiantly, looking at her.] Well, but what difference does that really make in the relation between us? At bottom, none at all.

ASTA. [Shakes her head.] It makes *all* the difference, Alfred. Our relation is not that of brother and sister.

ALLMERS. No, no. But it's none the less sacred for all that. It will always remain sacred.

ASTA. Don't forget — that it is subject to the law of change — as you said just now.

ALLMERS. [Looks at her scrutinizingly.] Do you mean that —?

ASTA. [Quietly, with warm emotion.] Not a word more — my dear, dear Alfred! [Takes the flowers from the chair.] Do you see these water lilies?

ALLMERS. [Nods slowly.] They are of the sort that shoot up — from the depths.

ASTA. I plucked them for you in the little lake — where it flows out into the fjord. [Holds them out to him.] Do you want them, Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Taking them.] Thank you.

ASTA. [With her eyes full of tears.] They are like a last greeting to you from — from little Eyolf.

ALLMERS. [Looking at her.] From Eyolf out there? Or from you?

ASTA. [In a low voice.] From both of us. [Taking up her umbrella.] Now come up with me to Rita.

[She goes up the forest path.]

ALLMERS. [Takes his hat from the table and whispers sadly.] Asta! Eyolf! Little Eyolf —!

[He follows her up the path.]

Third Act

An elevation, covered with a low thicket, in Allmers' garden. In the background a sheer descent, with a railing; to the left steps lead down. A wide view over the fjord, which lies far below. A flagpole with rigging, but without a flag, stands by the railing. In the foreground, to the right, a summer house, covered with creepers and wild vines. Outside it, a bench. It is a late summer evening, with a clear sky. Gathering twilight.

Asta sits on the bench, with her hands in her lap. She is wearing her wraps and a hat, has a parasol at her side, and a little travelling bag on a strap over her shoulder.

Borgheim comes up from the back on the left. He, too, has a travelling bag over his shoulder. Under his arm he carries a rolled flag.

Borgheim. [Catching sight of Asta.] Ah, so you are up here?

Asta. I am sitting here and looking out over all this for the last time.

BORGHEIM. Then it was good that I happened to come up here too.

ASTA. Have you been looking for me?

BORGHEIM. Yes, I have. I wanted to say good-bye to you — for this time. Not for the last time, I hope.

ASTA. [With a faint smile.] You are persevering.

BORGHEIM. A road-builder has got to be.

ASTA. Have you seen anything of Alfred? Or Rita?

BORGHEIM. Yes, I saw both of them.

ASTA. Together?

BORGHEIM. No. Each was alone.

ASTA. What are you going to do with that flag?

BORGHEIM. Mrs. Allmers asked me to come up and hoist it.

ASTA. Hoist the flag now?

BORGHEIM. To half mast. It is to fly both night and day, she says.

ASTA. [Sighing.] Poor Rita! And poor Alfred!

BORGHEIM. [Busy with the flag.] Have you the heart to go away from them? — I see you are in travelling dress.

ASTA. [In a low voice.] I *must* go.

BORGHEIM. Well, if you must, then —

ASTA. And you are going away to-night, too?

BORGHEIM. I must, too. I am going by the train. Are you going that way?

ASTA. No. I am going by the steamer.

BORGHEIM. [Glancing at her.] Each his own way, then.

ASTA. Yes.

[She sits and watches while he hoists the flag to half mast. When he has done so, he goes over to her.]

BORGHEIM. Miss Asta — you can't imagine how grieved I am about little Eyolf.

ASTA. [Looking up at him.] Yes, I am sure you are.

BORGHEIM. And the feeling tortures me. For the fact of the matter is that grief is not much in my line.

ASTA. [Raises her eyes to the flag.] In time it will pass over — all of it. All our griefs.

BORGHEIM. All? Do you believe that?

ASTA. Like showers of rain.[18] When once you get far away, then —

BORGHEIM. It will have to be very far away, indeed.

ASTA. And then you have this big new road-work, too.

BORGHEIM. But no one to help me in it.

ASTA. Oh, yes, you surely have.

BORGHEIM. [Shaking his head.] No one. No one to share the joy with me. For it is the joy that most needs sharing.

ASTA. Not the weariness and difficulty?

BORGHEIM. Pooh! — One can always get over that sort of thing alone.

ASTA. But the joy — that must be shared with some one, you mean?

BORGHEIM. Yes. Otherwise, where would there be any happiness in being glad?

ASTA. Well, there may be something in that.

BORGHEIM. Oh, of course, for a while you can go about being glad alone. But it won't do in the long run. No, it takes two to be glad.

ASTA. Always two? Never more? Never many?

BORGHEIM. Well, you see — then it becomes another matter. Miss Asta — can't you make up your mind to share happiness and joy — and weariness and difficulty, with one — with one alone?

ASTA. I have tried it — once.

BORGHEIM. Have you?

ASTA. Yes, all the time that my brother — that Alfred and I lived together.

BORGHEIM. Oh, with your brother, yes. But that is something different. It seems to me that that should be called peace rather than happiness.

ASTA. It was beautiful, all the same.

BORGHEIM. There — even *that* seemed to you to be beautiful. But just think now — suppose he had not been your brother!

ASTA. [Makes as if to rise, but remains seated.] Then we should never have lived together. For I was a child then — and he wasn't much more.

BORGHEIM. [After a pause.] *Was* it so beautiful — that time?

ASTA. Yes, you may be sure it was.

BORGHEIM. Was there anything really bright and happy in your life then?

ASTA. Oh, yes; so much. You can't think how much.

BORGHEIM. Tell me a little about it, Miss Asta.

ASTA. Oh, they were really only trifles.

BORGHEIM. Such as —? Well?

ASTA. Such as when Alfred passed his examination — and did so well. And then, by and by, when he got a position at some school or other. Or when he sat and wrote at an article and then read it aloud

to me. And then later, when he had it printed in some magazine.

BORGHEIM. Yes, I can quite see that it must have been a beautiful, peaceful life — brother and sister sharing their joys. [Shaking his head.] I can't understand how your brother could ever give you up, Asta.

ASTA. [With suppressed emotion.] Alfred married, you know.

BORGHEIM. Wasn't that hard for you?

ASTA. Yes, at first. It seemed to me that I had quite lost him then.

BORGHEIM. Well, luckily you hadn't.

ASTA. No.

BORGHEIM. But, all the same — that he could do it! Get married, I mean — when he could have kept you with him, alone!

ASTA. [Looking straight in front of her.] I suppose he was subject to the law of change.

BORGHEIM. The law of change?

ASTA. Alfred calls it that.

BORGHEIM. Pooh — what a foolish law that must be! I don't believe in that law a bit.

ASTA. [Rising.] In time you may come to believe in it.

BORGHEIM. Never in the world! [Insistently.]

But listen now, Miss Asta! Be reasonable — just for once — in this matter, I mean —

ASTA. [Interrupting.] Oh, no, no — don't let us begin upon *that* again!

BORGHEIM. [Continuing as before.] Yes, Asta — I can't possibly give you up so easily. Now your brother has got everything as he wishes it. He lives his life quite contentedly without you. He doesn't miss you at all. And then *this* — *this* — that, at one stroke, has changed your whole position out here —

ASTA. [With a start.] What do you mean by that?

BORGHEIM. The loss of the child. What else?

ASTA. [Regains her composure.] Little Eyolf is gone, yes.

BORGHEIM. And what more does that leave you to do here? You have no longer the poor little boy to take care of. You have no duties — no aim or object here, of any sort —

ASTA. Oh, I beg you, my dear Mr. Borgheim — don't urge me so hard.

BORGHEIM. I must; I would be silly if I didn't try my best. Before long I shall be leaving town, and maybe I shall get no opportunity to meet you there. Perhaps I shall not see you again for a long,

long time. And who knows what may happen in the meanwhile?

ASTA. [With a grave smile.] So you are afraid of the law of change, after all?

BORGHEIM. No, not in the least. [Laughs bitterly.] For there is nothing to be changed — not in you, I mean. I can see you don't care much about me.

ASTA. You know very well that I do.

BORGHEIM. Yes, but not nearly *enough*. Not as I want you to. [More vigorously.] Good Lord, Asta — Miss Asta — you are as wrong in all this as you could possibly be! A little ahead of to-day and to-morrow, perhaps, all of life's happiness may be awaiting us. And we let it lie there! Don't you think we may come to repent that, Asta?

ASTA. [Quietly.] I don't know. But I do know that all such bright possibilities are not for us.

BORGHEIM. [Looks at her with self-control.] Then I must build my roads alone?

ASTA. [Warmly.] Oh, if I could only be with you! Help you in your difficulties — share the joy with you —

BORGHEIM. Would you — if you could?

ASTA. Yes, then I would.

BORGHEIM. But you can't?

ASTA. [Looking down.] Would you be content with only half of me?

BORGHEIM. No. I must have you utterly and entirely!

ASTA. [Looks at him and says quietly] Then I can't.

BORGHEIM. Good-bye then, Miss Asta.

[He is on the point of going. Allmers comes up from the left, at the back. Borgheim stops.]

ALLMERS. [At the top of the steps, points and says in a low voice] Is Rita in there — in the summer-house?

BORGHEIM. No; there is no one here but Miss Asta.

[Allmers comes closer.]

ASTA. [Going toward him.] Shall I go down and look for her? Shall I bring her up here?

ALLMERS. [Waving her away.] No, no, no — let it alone. [To Borgheim.] Is it you that have hoisted the flag?

BORGHEIM. Yes. Mrs. Allmers asked me to do it. That was why I came up here.

ALLMERS. And to-night you are going away?

BORGHEIM. Yes. To-night I am going away for good.

ALLMERS. [With a glance at Asta.] And you have made sure of pleasant company, I dare say.

BORGHEIM. [Shaking his head.] I am going alone.

ALLMERS. [Surprised.] Alone!

BORGHEIM. So utterly alone!

ALLMERS. [Absently.] Indeed?

BORGHEIM. And I shall have to *remain* alone, too.

ALLMERS. There is something horrible about being alone. It is as if ice were going through me —

ASTA. Oh, but, Alfred, you are not alone.

ALLMERS. There can be something horrible in that, too, Asta.

ASTA. [Oppressed.] Oh, don't talk like that! Don't think like that!

ALLMERS. [Without heeding her.] But since you are not going —? Since there is nothing that binds you —? Why, then, won't you remain out here with me — and Rita?

ASTA. [Uneasily.] No; I can't. I must go back to town now.

ALLMERS. But only to town, Asta. Do you hear?

ASTA. Yes.

ALLMERS. And you must promise me that you will come out soon again.

ASTA. [Quickly.] No, no; I dare not promise you that, for the present.

ALLMERS. Well — as you will. Then we shall meet in town.

ASTA. [Beseechingly.] But Alfred, you must stay at home with Rita now.

ALLMERS. [Without answering, turning to Borgheim.] Perhaps it may be best for you, after all, that you have no travelling companion yet.

BORGHEIM. [Annoyed.] Oh, how can you say such a thing?

ALLMERS. Because you never can tell whom you may happen to meet afterward — on the way.

ASTA. [Involuntarily.] Alfred!

ALLMERS. The right fellow-traveller! When it is too late — too late —!

ASTA. [Softly, quivering.] Alfred! Alfred!

BORGHEIM. [Looking from one to the other.] What is the meaning of this? I don't understand —

[Rita comes up from the left, at the back.]

RITA. [Plaintively.] Oh, don't go away from me, all of you!

ASTA. [Goes toward her.] You said you preferred to be alone —

RITA. Yes, but I dare not. It is getting so hor-

ribly dark. I seem to see great, open eyes looking at me!

ASTA. [Softly and with sympathy.] What if it were so, Rita? You ought not to be afraid of those eyes.

RITA. How can you say that! Not afraid!

ALLMERS. [Insistently.] Asta, I beg you — for Heaven's sake — stay here with Rita!

RITA. Yes! And with Alfred, too! Do it! Do it, Asta!

ASTA. [Struggling with herself.] Oh, I want to so much —

RITA. Well, then, do it! For Alfred and I *cannot* go through all this sorrow and heartache alone.

ALLMERS. [Darkly.] Say, rather — through all this remorse and torment.

RITA. Oh, whatever you want to call it — we can't endure it alone, we two. Oh, Asta, I beg you! Stay here and help us! Take Eyolf's place —

ASTA. [Shrinking.] Eyolf's —!

RITA. Yes; may she not do so, Alfred?

ALLMERS. If she will and can.

RITA. You used to call her your little Eyolf. [Seizes her hand.] After this you are to be *our* Eyolf, Asta! Eyolf, as you used to be!

ALLMERS. [With concealed emotion.] Stay — and share our life with us, Asta. With Rita — with me — with me, your brother!

ASTA. [Determined, snatches her hand away.] No, I cannot! [Turns.] Mr. Borgheim — what time does the steamer leave?

BORGHEIM. Very soon now.

ASTA. Then I must go on board. Will you go with me?

BORGHEIM. [With a suppressed exclamation of joy.] Will I? Yes, yes, yes!

ASTA. Then come!

RITA. [Slowly.] Ah! That is how it is! Well, *then* you can't stay with us.

ASTA. [Throwing her arms round her neck.] Thank you for everything, Rita! [Goes over and grasps Allmers' hand.] Alfred — good-bye! A thousand thousand times, good-bye!

ALLMERS. [Softly, but intently.] What is this, Asta? It looks like a flight.

ASTA. [In fear.] Yes, Alfred — it *is* a flight.

ALLMERS. A flight — from *me?*

ASTA. [Whispering.] A flight from you — and from myself!

ALLMERS. [Shrinking back.] Ah —!

[Asta rushes down at the back. Borgheim waves

his hat and follows her. Rita leans against the entrance to the summer house. Allmers goes, in strong, inward excitement, toward the railing, and stands there looking down. A pause.]

ALLMERS. [Turns, and says with hard-fought-for composure] There comes the steamer. Look there, Rita.

RITA. I dare not look at it.

ALLMERS. You dare not?

RITA. *No.* It has a red eye — and a green one, too. Great, glowing eyes!

ALLMERS. Oh, those are only the lights.

RITA. After this they are eyes — for me. They stare and stare out of the darkness — and into the darkness.

ALLMERS. Now she is putting in to shore.

RITA. Where are they putting in this evening?

ALLMERS. [Coming closer.] At the pier, as usual, my dear —

RITA. [Drawing herself up.] How *can* they put in there?

ALLMERS. They must.

RITA. But it was *there* that Eyolf —! How *can* they put in there?

ALLMERS. Yes, life is pitiless, Rita.

RITA. People are heartless. They pay no heed — either to the living or to the dead.

ALLMERS. You are right. Life goes its way — just as if nothing in the world had happened.

RITA. [Gazing straight before her.] And nothing *has* happened, *either*. Not to others. Only to us two.

ALLMERS. [The pain re-awakening.] Yes, Rita — so uselessly it was that you bore him in pain and anguish. For now he is gone again — and has left no trace behind him.

RITA. Only the crutch was saved.

ALLMERS. [Angrily.] Be silent! Don't let me hear that word!

RITA. [Plaintively.] Oh, I can't bear the thought that we have him no longer!

ALLMERS. [Coldly and bitterly.] You could very well do without him while you had him. Whole half-days would pass without your setting eyes on him.

RITA. No; for then I knew that I could see him whenever I wanted to.

ALLMERS. Yes, that is how we have gone on and squandered away the short time we had with little Eyolf.

RITA. [Listening in fear.] Listen, Alfred! Now it is ringing again!

ALLMERS. [Looks out over the fjord.] It is the steamer's bell that is ringing. She is ready to go.

RITA. Oh, it isn't *that* bell I mean. All day I have heard it ringing in my ears. Now it is ringing again!

ALLMERS. [Goes toward her.] You are mistaken, Rita.

RITA. No; I hear it so plainly. It sounds like a funeral bell. Slow. Slow. And always the same words.

ALLMERS. Words? What words?

RITA. [Nodding her head to the rhythm.] "The crutch is — floating. The crutch is — floating." [19] Oh, you must be able to hear it, too!

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] I hear nothing. And there *is* nothing.

RITA. Oh, you may say what you please — I hear it plainly.

ALLMERS. [Looking out over the railing.] Now they are on board, Rita. Now the steamer is on her way to town.

RITA. To think that you don't hear it! "The crutch is — floating. The crutch — "

ALLMERS. [Comes forward.] You should not stand there listening to a sound that doesn't exist! I say that Asta and Borgheim are now on board. They are already on their way. — Asta is gone.

RITA. [Looks at him timidly.] Then I suppose you will soon be gone, too, Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Quickly.] What do you mean by *that?*

RITA. That you will follow your sister.

ALLMERS. Has Asta said anything?

RITA. No. But you said yourself that it was for Asta's sake that — that we too came together.

ALLMERS. Yes, but you, you have bound me yourself — by our life together.

RITA. Oh, in your eyes I am not — not so — entrancingly beautiful any more.

ALLMERS. Perhaps the law of change may keep us together, all the same.

RITA. [Nods slowly.] There *is* a change in me now. I feel the pain of it so keenly.

ALLMERS. The pain of it?

RITA. Yes, for there is a sort of birth in that, too.

ALLMERS. There is — or a resurrection. A transition to a higher life.

RITA. [Gazes sadly straight ahead.] Yes — but with the loss of all — all life's happiness.

ALLMERS. That loss is just the gain.

RITA. [Vehemently.] Oh, phrases! Good Lord, we are creatures of earth, after all.

ALLMERS. But something akin to the sea and the sky as well, Rita.

RITA. You, perhaps. Not I.

ALLMERS. Oh, yes — *you* more than you know yourself.

RITA. [A step closer.] Listen, Alfred — couldn't you think of taking up your work again?

ALLMERS. The work that you have hated?

RITA. I am easier to please now. I am willing to share you with the book.

ALLMERS. Why?

RITA. Only to keep you here with me — to have you near me.

ALLMERS. Oh, I can do so little to help you, Rita.

RITA. But perhaps I could help you.

ALLMERS. With my work, do you mean?

RITA. No; but to live your life.

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] It seems to me that I have no life to live.

RITA. Well, then, to *endure* life.

ALLMERS. [Darkly, looking straight ahead of

him.] I believe it would be best for both of us if we parted.

RITA. [Looks at him scrutinizingly.] Then where would you go? Perhaps to Asta, after all?

ALLMERS. No. Never to Asta after this.

RITA. Where, then?

ALLMERS. Up into the solitudes.

RITA. Up among the mountains? Is that what you mean?

ALLMERS. Yes.

RITA. But all this is mere dreaming, Alfred! You couldn't live up there.

ALLMERS. At any rate, I feel myself drawn up there.

RITA. Why? Tell me!

ALLMERS. Sit down. Then I will tell you something.

RITA. Something that happened to you up there?

ALLMERS. Yes.

RITA. And which you kept from Asta and me?

ALLMERS. Yes.

RITA. Oh, you go about everything so silently. You shouldn't do that.

ALLMERS. Sit down there. Then I will tell you.

RITA. Yes, yes — let me hear!

[She sits on the bench beside the summer house.]

ALLMERS. I was alone up there, in the midst of the high mountains. I came to a wide, dreary mountain lake, and that lake I had to cross. But I couldn't do it, for there were neither boats nor people there.

RITA. Well? And then?

ALLMERS. Then I went on alone into a side valley. I thought in that way I could get over the heights and between the peaks, and then down again on the other side of the lake.

RITA. Oh; and then, I suppose, you got lost, Alfred?

ALLMERS. Yes; I mistook the direction, for there was neither road nor path. And I walked all day, and all the next night as well. And at last I thought I should never see the face of man again.

RITA. Not come home to us? Oh, then, I know for sure that your thoughts were with us here.

ALLMERS. No; they were not.

RITA. Not?

ALLMERS. No. It was so strange. Both you and Eyolf seemed to have drifted so far, far away from me — and Asta, too.

RITA. Then what did you think of?

ALLMERS. I did not think. I dragged myself along the precipices — and revelled in the peace and joy of the sensation of death.

RITA. [Springing up.] Oh, don't speak in that way about horrible things!

ALLMERS. That is how it seemed to me. I had no fear whatever. There went I and death, like two good fellow-travellers. It all seemed so natural — so simple. In my family, we don't usually live to be old —

RITA. Oh, don't say such things, Alfred! You got out of it safely, after all.

ALLMERS. Yes. All of a sudden, I was over — on the other side of the water.

RITA. It must have been a night of terror for you, Alfred. But now that it is over, you will not admit it to yourself.

ALLMERS. That night made me decide! Then it was that I turned and came straight home — to Eyolf!

RITA. [Softly.] Too late.

ALLMERS. Yes. And then, when — my fellow-traveller came and took him — *then* the horror of it stood forth — of it all — of all *that* — which, in spite of everything, we dare not flee from. So bound to the earth are we, both of us, Rita!

RITA. [With a gleam of joy.] Yes, isn't it true! You, too! [Comes closer.] Oh, let us live our life together as long as we can!

ALLMERS. [Shrugging his shoulders.] Live our life, yes! And have nothing to fill life with. Desolation and emptiness everywhere — wherever I look.

RITA. [Frightened.] Oh, sooner or later you will go away from me, Alfred! I feel it! And I can see it on you! You will go away from me!

ALLMERS. With my fellow-traveller, do you mean?

RITA. No. I mean that which is worse. You will go away from me of your own free will — for you think that it's only here, with me, that you have nothing to live for. Answer me! Isn't that what you think?

ALLMERS. [Looks at her steadfastly.] And if I thought that —?

[Noises and screams, as of angry, passionate voices, are heard from far below. Allmers goes to the railing.]

RITA. What is that? [With an outburst.] Oh, you'll see, — they have found him!

ALLMERS. He will never be found.

RITA. But what is it, then?

ALLMERS. [Comes forward.] Only fighting — as usual.

RITA. Down on the beach?

ALLMERS. Yes. The whole settlement down there ought to be wiped out. Now the men have come home — drunk as usual. They are beating the children. Listen how the boys are screaming. The women are shrieking for help for them —

RITA. Shouldn't we get somebody to go down and help them?

ALLMERS. [Harshly and angrily.] Help those who didn't help Eyolf? No! Let them die — as they let Eyolf die!

RITA. Oh, you must not talk like that, Alfred! Not think like that!

ALLMERS. I cannot think otherwise. All the old huts ought to be torn down.

RITA. And then what would become of all the poor people?

ALLMERS. They would have to go somewhere else.

RITA. And the children?

ALLMERS. Does it make any difference *where* they go to the dogs?

RITA. [Quietly and reproachfully.] You are forcing yourself into this harshness, Alfred.

ALLMERS. [Vehemently.] It is my *right* to be harsh after this! It is my *duty!*

RITA. Your duty?

ALLMERS. My duty to Eyolf. He must not lie unavenged. Rita, it is as I tell you! Think it over! Have the whole place down there razed to the ground — when I am gone.

RITA. [Looks at him intently.] When you are gone?

ALLMERS. Yes. For that, at least, will give you something to fill your life with. And you must have something.

RITA. [Firmly and with resolution.] You are right. I must. But can you guess what I shall do — when you are gone?

ALLMERS. Well, what?

RITA. [Slowly and with decision.] As soon as you have left me, I shall go down to the beach, and bring all the poor, neglected children home with me. All the bad boys —

ALLMERS. What will you do with them here?

RITA. I will take them to my heart.

ALLMERS. *You!*

RITA. Yes, I will! From the day you leave me, they shall be here, all of them — as if they were my own.

ALLMERS. [Indignant.] In our little Eyolf's place?

RITA. Yes, in our little Eyolf's place. They shall live in Eyolf's rooms. They shall read his books. They shall play with his toys. They shall take turns at sitting in his chair at table.

ALLMERS. But this is all sheer lunacy! I don't know any one in the world less fitted for such things than you.

RITA. Then I must educate myself for it; teach myself; discipline myself.

ALLMERS. If you are in real earnest about this — about all you say — then a change must have taken place in you.

RITA. There has, Alfred. *You* have seen to that. You have made an empty place within me, and I must try to fill it up with something — with something that is a little like love.

ALLMERS. [Stands for a moment, lost in thought; then looks at her.] The truth is, we haven't done much for the poor people down there.

RITA. We have done nothing for them.

ALLMERS. Scarcely even thought of them.

RITA. Never thought of them in sympathy.

ALLMERS. We who had "the gold and the green forests" —

RITA. Our hands were closed to them. And our hearts were closed, too.

ALLMERS. [Nods.] Then, perhaps, it was natural enough, after all, that they didn't risk their lives to save little Eyolf.

RITA. [In a low voice.] Think, Alfred! Are you sure that — that we would have dared it ourselves?

ALLMERS. [With an uneasy gesture of repulsion.] You must never doubt *that,* Rita!

RITA. Oh, we are children of earth.

ALLMERS. What do you really think you will do with all those neglected children?

RITA. I suppose I must try to soften — and ennoble their lot in life.

ALLMERS. If you can do *that* — then Eyolf was not born in vain.

RITA. Nor taken from us in vain, either.

ALLMERS. [Looking at her steadfastly.] Be clear about one thing, Rita — it is not love that is driving you to this.

RITA. No, it is not that — at any rate, not yet.

ALLMERS. Well, what is it, then?

RITA. [Half-evasively.] You have so often talked to Asta of human responsibility —

ALLMERS. Of the book that you hated.

RITA. I still hate the book. But I sat and listened when you talked. And now I will try to continue it myself — in *my* way.

ALLMERS. [Shaking his head.] It is not for the sake of the unfinished book —

RITA. No, I have another reason.

ALLMERS. What is it?

RITA. [In a low voice, smiling sadly.] I want to make my peace with the great, open eyes, you see.

ALLMERS. [Struck, fixes his gaze upon her.] Perhaps I could join you in that — and help you, Rita.

RITA. Would you?

ALLMERS. Yes — if only I were sure that I could.

RITA. [Hesitatingly.] But then you would have to stay here.

ALLMERS. [In a low voice.] Let us try to do it.

RITA. [In a scarcely audible voice.] Let us, Alfred.

[Both are silent. Then Allmers goes to the flagpole and hoists the flag to the top. Rita stands beside the summer house and looks at him silently.]

ALLMERS. [Comes forward again.] We have a heavy work-day before us, Rita.

RITA. You will see — that now and then a Sabbath peace will come over us.

ALLMERS. [Quietly, moved.] Then, perhaps, we shall sense the presence of the spirits.

RITA. [Whispering.] The spirits?

ALLMERS. [As before.] Yes. Then, perhaps, they are about us — those whom we have lost.

RITA. [Nods slowly.] Our little Eyolf. And your big Eyolf, too.

ALLMERS. [Gazes straight before him.] Now and then, perhaps — on our way through life — we may have a passing glimpse of them.

RITA. Where shall we look, Alfred?

ALLMERS. [Fixing his eyes upon her.] Upward!

RITA. [Nods approvingly.] Yes, yes — upward.

ALLMERS. Upward — toward the peaks. Toward the stars. And toward the great silence.

RITA. [Giving him her hand.] Thanks!

[THE END.]

NOTES

[1] Vilhelm Möller, in the Copenhagen *Tilskueren* (Spectator) for April, 1895.

[2] Heiberg was one of Ibsen's successors as artistic director of the Bergen Theatre. He was born in 1857 and has a number of popular plays to his credit, including "Aunt Ulrikke," 1884; "King Midas," 1889; "The Balcony," 1894; "Gert's Garden," 1894; "The Capital Prize," 1895; "The Counsel for the People," 1897; Harald Svan's Mother," 1899; "Love for Your Neighbor," 1903; and "Love's Tragedy," 1904. The heroine of "The Balcony," Julie by name, is a sort of fantastic vampire. Married to a man much her senior, she is bored and unhappy until a lover appears. When a fatal accident removes her husband from the scene, she and the lover fall on their knees and give thanks. But after they are married, Julie is scarcely more contented than before. Abel, the new husband, is engrossed by his work. Julie demands that he sacrifice it on the altar of their love, and when he refuses she straightway acquires a lover again. This time he is one Antonio. When Antonio, in turn, gives evidence that he is interested in things other than love, she taunts him with the question: "Have you, too, civilized love out of your body?" After that, Antonio makes an effort to approach her ideal, and the result is disaster. The piece was played at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, but made no great success. The dialogue is en-

tirely unrestrained, but strangely enough, its most appalling indecencies are placed in the mouth of the doomed first husband. The critics condemned the play for the utter anarchy of its morals. Heiberg's "King Midas," a far better drama, foreshadowed the theme of Pinero's "His House in Order." The principal figure is a woman who mourns for her dead husband so grievously that a second marriage seems to her to be almost sacrilegious. Then some one shows her that her dead idol had his feet in very dirty clay. "The Great Prize" attempts to depict the influence of sudden wealth, acquired in a lottery, upon a man of the masses. Heiberg's wife is Didi Tollefsen, who appeared in the Ibsen plays at Bergen as early as 1882 and later made a reputation as Rebecca West in Christiania.

[8] Mr. Archer suggests that Ibsen may have got his idea for Allmers and Rita from the history of Charlotte Stieglitz and her husband. This history is recounted in Georg Brandes' volume on "Young Germany" in his "Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature" (Eng. tr. vol. vi). With this work, of course, the dramatist was familiar. Charlotte Stieglitz was born in Leipzig in 1806 and married Heinrich Stieglitz, a minor poet of the "Young Germany" movement. Stieglitz was a weak, impractical man of decidedly limited gifts, but Charlotte regarded him as a man of genius and tried to spur him on to high endeavor. In the end, she committed suicide, in order, as Brandes says, "that a great, simple sorrow might enter into his life, reawaken his genius and give his poetry new themes." Needless to say, this heroic sacrifice was in vain. Mr. Archer thinks that Charlotte suggested Rita because she was subject to what she called her "champagne moods," but a fair reading of her story shows that her enthusiasm at such times was not for love, but

for achievement. She was willing to renounce her love, as she actually gave her life, if only the sacrifice might inspire her pitiful poetaster of a husband. "I wish," she wrote to him, "that you would have more intercourse, either personally or by correspondence, with clever, womanly women," it being her notion that such intercourse might broaden him. Mr. Archer also seems to think that Ibsen was influenced by Thomas Hardy. "To say nothing of analogies of detail between 'Little Eyolf' and 'Jude the Obscure,'" he argues, "there is this radical analogy, that they are both utterances of a profound pessimism, both indictments of nature." A careful comparison fails to reveal this analogy, and even if it existed, it would be unimportant. Profound pessimism is not rare in literature and neither are indictments of Nature. As a matter of fact, the philosophy of "Little Eyolf" is, in its ultimate summing-up, optimistic rather than the reverse.

[4] All of this is discussed in Nietzsche's "*Morgenröte*" ("The Dawn of Day").

[5] It is generally agreed among those critics who seek for symbols in the Ibsen plays that the Rat-Wife is a grotesque embodiment of death. In the old days, says Vilhelm Möller, poets and artists represented death as an old man with a scythe, but the melancholy bards of modern times, such as Turgenieff and Ibsen, see the grim reaper as an old woman. Mr. Archer agrees with Möller and regards the Rat-Wife and the strange fellow-traveller whom Allmers meets in the mountains as interchangeable, if not identical. Mr. Macfall seems to be of the same opinion, though he is by no means sure. Mr. Shaw boldly groups the Rat-Wife, the Strange Passenger of "Peer Gynt," and the Button Moulder of the same play, as varying forms of the same symbol.

Mr. Gosse calls the Rat-Wife "the angel of God." M. Faguet and Mrs. Lee say aye. The last-named is the most imaginative of all the symbolists. To her, every character in the Ibsen plays seems a recondite representation of some more or less abstract and elusive idea. Thus Asta is Allmers' innocence — "the higher nature with whom (*sic*) he might have lived forever, had he not been blind"; Eyolf is "the little gnawing thing, the remorse of Allmers' life" and also "the compensation granted by the law of change"; the Rat-Wife is "the beneficent law of change" itself; and even Mopsëman, the dog, has some significance. Mr. Huneker redüces this symbolic hair-splitting to an absurdity when he gravely announces that "the gold and green forest is (*sic*) symbol of what Rita brought her husband." In other words, the things she actually brought him are symbols of themselves! After this let us hear Mr. Payne, who sees naught in "Little Eyolf" but "a direct transcript of life under ideal conditions arranged by a consummate artistic sense," and Dr. Brandes, who believes that "there is not a symbol in the whole of Ibsen."

[6] Ibsen's own view of this matter is given in a note to "A Doll's House," in the present edition of his plays.

[7] In the original the name is spelled with the Scandinavian "j" — "Borghejm." The names are pronounced as follows: Allmers — *Ol*-mers; Rita — *Ree*-ta; Asta — *Aas*-ta; Borgheim — *Borg*-hime, with the German "g"; Eyolf — *Eye*-olf.

[8] Literally, "lion buttons." The lion is conspicuous on the Norwegian coat-of-arms and appears upon all military insignia.

[9] In the original, Eyolf speaks of and to Borgheim without prefix.

[10] In the Norwegian dialect *varg* means a wolf. In the pure Danish the word is *ulv*.

[11] A Norwegian idiom signifying the same as our "swallowing the bitter pill."

[12] *Moppe* and *mops* mean pug-dog, and from the words various pet names for dogs are derived.

[13] A Norwegian brother to our common mouth-organ or harmonica, so much beloved by darkey boys in the South.

[14] "Gold and green forests" is a common proverbial expression in Scandinavia. It signifies any promised reward or good fortune. Here, of course, it is used both figuratively and literally.

[15] Literally, "you let him go for lye and cold water." In the common speech of Norway "lye and cold water" represent the smallest possible modicum of attention, and so stand for neglect.

[16] This is a reference to a poem by Johan Sebastian Cammermeyer Welhaven (1807-73), well-known in Scandinavia. It is called "*Republikanerne*" ("Republicans," or, more exactly, "Revolutionaries") and was written in 1839, at a time when the troubles of Poland were holding the attention of all Europe. In this poem a riotous party of young Frenchmen, in a Paris café, call upon a stranger to drink a health to Poland. When he refuses, they denounce him as a coward and a foe to liberty. He then dramatically bares his breast and

shows the scars he has received in fighting for Poland on the battle-field. The contrast between this stranger's valor of act and their own windy platitudes overcomes the roisterers, and they are silent as he departs. "They looked at each other," says the poet. "The stranger went on his way. There stood their champagne, but they tasted it not." Mr. Macfall accuses Ibsen of "an unforgivable and deplorably inartistic blunder" in the use of this incident, on the ground that it "makes a most important effect depend on the audience knowing another man's poem — and that, too, by no means a widely diffused poem." As a matter of fact, "*Republikanerne*" is as familiar in Scandinavia as "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is in England and America, and so the criticism falls to the ground. Welhaven, like Ibsen, was of German ancestry, and like Ibsen again, was a bitter critic of Norwegian deficiencies. His sonnet cycle, "Norway's Dawn," published in 1834, aroused a great storm. The book was publicly burned by valiant patriots, but its bitter truths went home. That Welhaven, indeed, may have furnished the inspiration for Ibsen's life-work is certainly not improbable.

[17] Literally, "starts half up from the bench." How this mystifying feat is to be accomplished Ibsen doesn't explain.

[18] This sentence has well served to display the virtuosity and versatility of translators. In the original it is "*Ligesom et Bygevjr.*" Count Prozor makes it "*Comme le vent chasse les nuages;*" Elias and Schlenther make it "*Wie ein Regenschauer*" and Mr. Archer renders it "Like a squall at sea."

[19] It is curious to note that this creepy iteration, like the tarantelle in "A Doll's House," failed to achieve

the dramatic effectiveness Ibsen obviously intended it to have. At the first performance in Copenhagen Mme. Nielsen essayed to help matters by falling to the floor on speaking the lines. But this had the unfortunate effect of provoking the scorn of the critics, who denounced her for employing such a banal device.

TRANSLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

"Little Eyolf" had its first performance on any stage at the Deutsches Theatre, Berlin, on January 12, 1895, with Frau Agnes Sorma as Rita and Herr Reicher as Allmers. Three days later, on January 15, it was presented for the first time in Christiania, at the Christiania Theatre. Fru Wettergren was the Rita and Fru Dybwad the Asta. On March 13, of the same year, the piece was played in Copenhagen, with Fru Oda Nielsen as Rita, Fru Hennings as Asta, Emil Poulsen as Allmers, Christian Zangenberg as Borgheim and Fröken Antonsen as the Rat-Wife. Performances in Vienna, Helsingfors, Amsterdam, Milan, Bergen, Munich, Warsaw and other cities followed, and on May 8, 1895, Count Prozor's translation was presented in Paris, at the Théâtre de L'Oeuvre, with Lugne-Poë as Allmers, Mme. Mellot as Rita, Mme. Desprès as Asta and Mme. Zapolska as the Rat-Wife. A party of Norwegian amateurs gave a morning performance of the original play at the Haymarket Theatre in London, Dec. 3, 1894. Four days afterward a copyright performance of Archer's English version was given at the Theatre Royal, with a cast including H. L. Braekstad, Mrs. Braekstad, Miss Braekstad, Miss Elizabeth Robins, William Heinemann and Edmund Gosse. But it was not until late in 1896 that "Little Eyolf" was offered to the public in English. Then, at the Avenue Theatre,

London, on the afternoon of Nov. 23, the play was given with the following cast:

Alfred Allmers	Courtenay Thorpe
Rita	Miss Janet Achurch
Asta	Miss Elizabeth Robins
Engineer Borgheim	Mr. Lowne
The Rat-Wife	Mrs. Patrick Campbell
Little Eyolf	Master Stewart Dawson

Miss Achurch gave an excellent performance, but the venture was not profitable, and so, in the hope of attracting her large following, Mrs. Campbell was given the part of Rita. That of the Rat-Wife fell to Miss Florence Farr. But the public did not welcome the change.

Early in 1895, "Little Eyolf" was played by Norwegian amateurs in Chicago, but it was not until May 13, 1907, that Americans saw the play in English. Then Mme. Oda Nielsen, though she knew the language but imperfectly, gave one performance at the Carnegie Lyceum in New York City. The cast was as follows:

Alfred Allmers	Georgio Majeroni
Rita	Miss Gretchen Hartman
Asta	Miss Sarah McVicker
Engineer Borgheim	Munroe Salisbury
The Rat-Wife	Miss Shultetus Buroldo
Little Eyolf	Mme. Nielsen

Mme. Nielsen appeared on the bill as "Mme. Oda," and her manager, one DeWitz, assumed the title of "Baron." The performance was not a success, and it was never repeated. Despite her reputation in Scandinavia, Mme. Nielsen failed to impress the New York critics. Her acting, indeed, seemed to them intolerably "melodramatic and stagey."

Mme. Alla Nazimova, who has appeared in New York as Nora Helmer, Hedda Gabler and Hilda Wangel, informs me that she is soon to present "Little Eyolf."

"Little Eyolf" was published in Copenhagen Dec. 11, 1894. The publisher, Hegel, printed 10,000 copies, but in ten days another edition of 5,000 was needed. Jan. 20, 1895, a third edition appeared, and since then there have been several other editions. Twelve copies of the original edition were issued by William Heinemann in London, Dec. 11, 1895, for copyright purposes, and during the same year Archer's English translation appeared. Simultaneously French, Russian, Dutch and German translations were published. In 1896 came a second Russian version; in 1897 an Italian translation; and in 1899 the Elias and Schlenther German text. Since then the play has been done into Spanish, Polish, Hungarian and Yiddish. Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic versions, of course, appeared very early. The principal Ritas have been Agnes Sorma, Fru Wettergren, Janet Achurch, Oda Nielsen, Fru Irgens-Hansen, Fru Hakonson and Fräulein Sandrock, and the principal Allmers, Reicher, Emil Poulsen, Halvorsen, Courtenay Thorpe, Roald, Svennberg and Lugnê Poë.

Like the earlier Ibsen plays, "Little Eyolf" has brought forth various parodies and sequels. Among them are "Little Mopsëman" by F. Anstey Guthrie, in "Punch's Pocket Ibsen" (London, 1895); "Lilla Moppe," in "Ibsen i Västficksformat" ("Ibsen in Vest-pocket Form"), (Stockholm, 1895); and "Klein Eyolf: eine Geisterstimme," (Berlin, 1895). The play provoked a controversy almost as violent as that which raged 'round "Ghosts" in 1882, but it has never prospered greatly on the stage. The original run in Christiania was 36 performances.

BOOKS IN ENGLISH DEALING WITH "LITTLE EYOLF"

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